


**The
Forty-Five
Guardsmen
Vol I**



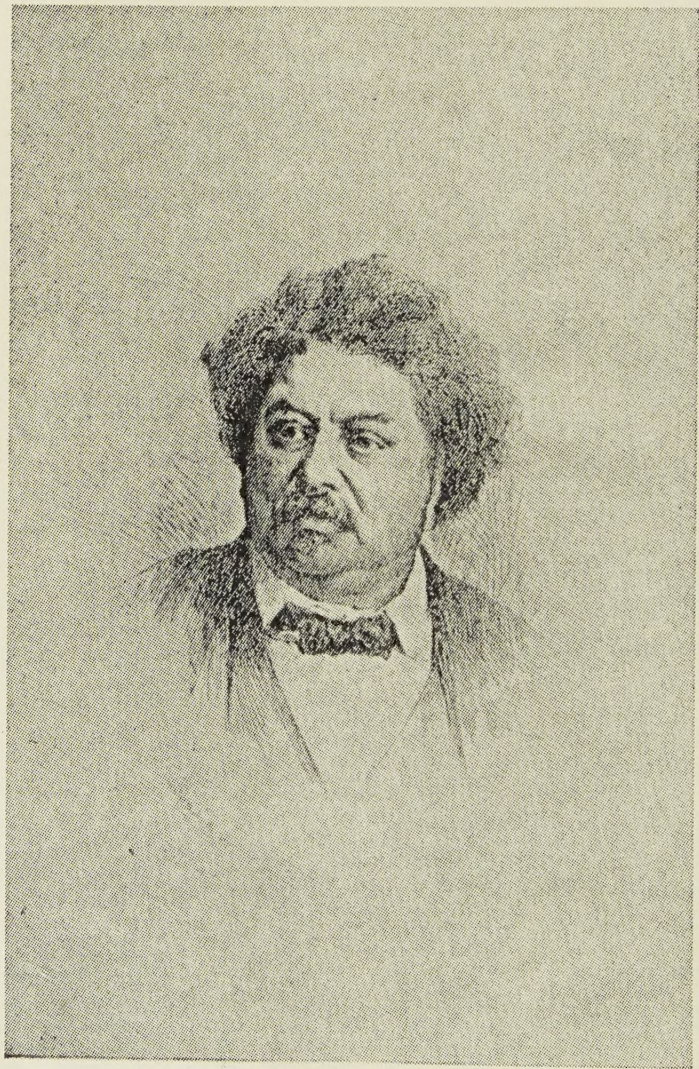
**By
Alexandre
Dumas**



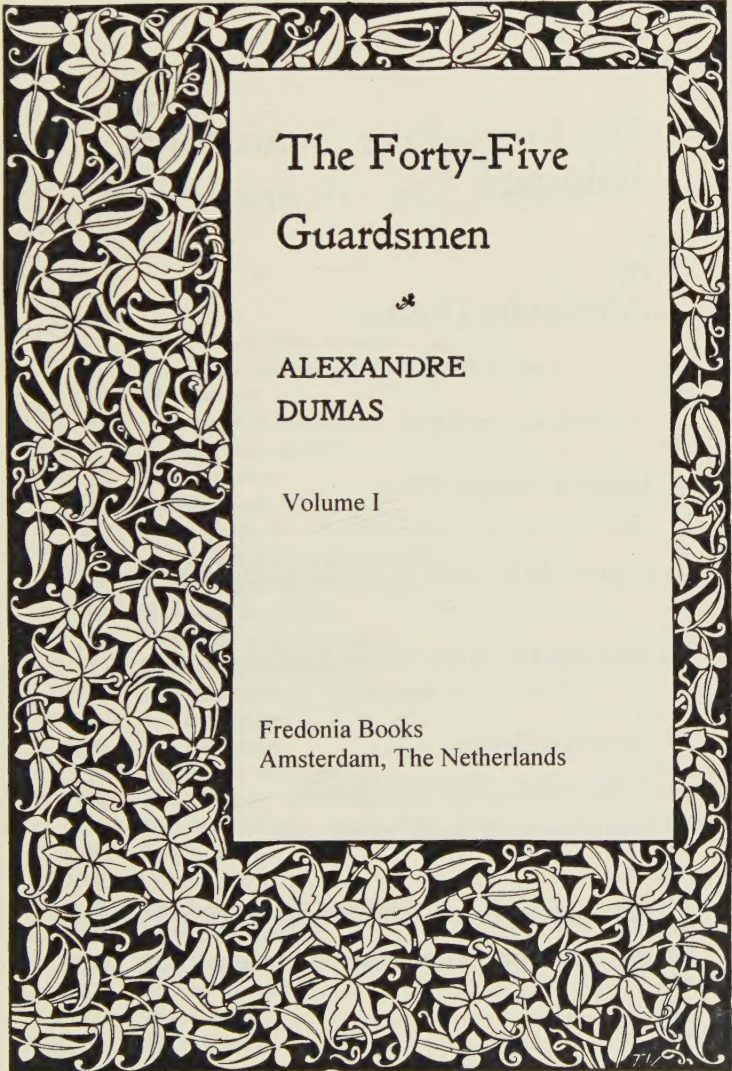
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PORTRAIT OF DUMAS.



The Forty-Five Guardsmen



ALEXANDRE
DUMAS

Volume I

Fredonia Books
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The Forty-Five Guardsmen Volume I

by
Alexandre Dumas

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THE FORTY-FIVE

VOL. I.

THE FORTY-FIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE GATE OF SAINT ANTOINE.

Etiam si omnes !

ON the 26th of October, in the year 1585, the barriers of the Porte Saint Antoine, contrary to the usual custom, were still closed at half-past ten in the morning.

At a quarter to eleven, a guard of twenty Swiss, who, by their uniform, could be recognized as Swiss from the small cantons, that is to say, the best friends of Henry the Third, then reigning, marched down from the Rue de la Mortellerie, and advanced towards the Porte Saint Antoine, which opened, and closed behind them ; once outside this gate, they ranged themselves along the hedges, which, outside the barrier, bordered the scattered enclosures on each side of the road, and, by their presence alone, drove back a good number of peasants and small bourgeois, coming from Montreuil, Vincennes, or Saint Maur, to enter the city before noon, an operation they were unable to effect, the gate, as we have observed, being closed.

If it be true that a crowd naturally brings disorder in its train, we might suppose that, by sending this guard, Monsieur le Prévôt intended to prevent the disorder which might take place at the Porte Saint Antoine.

In fact, the crowd was considerable ; new-comers arriving

at every moment by three converging roads ; friars from the convents of the suburbs, women seated on pack saddles, peasants in their carts, increased this already compact mass, which the unusual closing of the gates stopped at the barriers, and all, by their questions, more or less pressing, made a species of low, continued murmur. At times, some voices, rising above the general pitch, ascended even to the octave of anger or complaint.

We might also observe, besides this multitude who were desirous of entering the town, some special groups, who seemed to have issued from it. These, instead of gazing into the town, through the interstices of the barriers, scanned the horizon, bounded by the convent of the Jacobins, the priory of Vincennes, and the croix Faubin, as if, by one of these three routes, forming a sort of fan, they were expecting the advent of some Messiah.

The latter groups bore some resemblance to the tranquil islands which rise in the middle of the Seine, whilst around them, the whirling and playing water detaches either a morsel of turf or some willow twigs, which, after hesitating some time on the eddies, at length determine to float with the stream.

These groups, on which we dwell at some length, because they deserve all our attention, were composed, for the most part, of the bourgeois of Paris, warmly wrapped up in their trunk hose and doublets, for we have forgotten to state the weather was cold, the wind cutting, and heavy clouds, rolling near the earth, seemed determined to wrest from the trees the last yellow leaves which still mournfully trembled on the branches.

Three of these bourgeois conversed together, or rather, two were conversing, and the third listening. Let us better express our meaning and say, the third did not even appear to listen, so attentively was he looking towards Vincennes.

Let us first turn our attention to the latter.

He was a man of high stature when erect ; but at this

moment, his long legs, which he seemed ignorant how to manage when they were not actively employed, were bent under him, while his arms, not less proportionately long than his legs, were crossed over his doublet. Leaning against the hedge, agreeably supported by the elastic bushes, and with the obstinacy of a man who is desirous of not being recognized, he kept his face concealed by his long hand, risking merely an eye, whose piercing glance darted between the middle and ring finger, separated to the distance strictly necessary to allow the passage of the visual ray.

By the side of this singular personage, a little man, perched on a hillock, was talking with a fat man, who was endeavoring to steady himself on the slope of this same hillock, and, at every slip, grasped the buttons of his neighbor's doublet.

These were the two other bourgeois, forming with the person seated, the cabalistic number of three, mentioned in a preceding paragraph.

"Yes, Maître Miton," said the little man to the fat one, "yes, I say, and I repeat; there will be a hundred thousand people round the scaffold of Salcede, a hundred thousand at least. See, without counting those who are already at the Place de Grève, or going thither from the different quarters of Paris, see the multitude here, and this is only one gate. Judge, then, as there are sixteen gates."

"A hundred thousand! it is a good number, neighbor Friard," replied the fat man; "many, believe me, will follow my example, and will not go to see this wretched Salcede quartered, for fear of an uproar, and they will be right."

"Maître Miton, Maître Miton, take care," replied the little man; "you are speaking like a politician. There will be nothing, absolutely nothing, I'll answer for it."

And seeing that his interlocutor shook his head in a doubtful manner :

"Am I not right, monsieur?" he continued, turning towards the man with the long legs and arms, who, instead of directing his gaze towards Vincennes, had, without removing his hand from before his face, changed his point of view, and chosen the barrier upon which to fix his attention.

"What?" demanded the latter, as if he had only heard the question addressed to him, and not the preceding words, which had been addressed to the second bourgeois.

"I say that nothing will take place at the Grève to-day."

"I think you are mistaken, and that there will be the quartering of Salcede," quietly answered the man with the long legs and arms.

"Yes, no doubt; but I say there will be no noise in consequence of this quartering."

"There will be the noise of the lashes bestowed upon the horses."

"You misunderstand me; by noise I mean tumult, and I say there will be no tumult. If a tumult were expected, the king would not have had a stand at the Hôtel de Ville, decorated, to receive him, the two queens, and a part of the court who will witness the execution."

"Do kings always know when a tumult is to take place?" said the tall man, shrugging his shoulders, with an air of sovereign pity.

"Oh, oh!" said Maître Miton, stooping to his companion's ear, "the man speaks in a queer fashion. Do you know him, neighbor?"

"No," replied the little man.

"Well, why do you speak to him, then?"

"I speak to him to speak to him."

"And you are wrong; you see plainly he is not of a talkative nature."

"It seems to me, however," replied neighbor Friard, loud enough to be heard by the man alluded to, "that

one of the greatest blessings of life is to exchange thoughts."

"With those we know well," replied Maître Miton, "but not with those of whom we know nothing."

"Are not all men brothers, as the curate of Saint Leu says?" added compère Friard, in a persuasive tone.

"They were so originally, but in times like ours, the relationship has strangely relaxed, friend Friard. Talk with me, then, if you are bent upon talking, and leave this stranger to his meditations."

"Yes; but I have known you a long while, as you say, and I know beforehand what you will answer; whereas, on the contrary, this stranger may perhaps have something new to tell me."

"Hush! he is listening to you."

"So much the better; if he hears me, perhaps he will reply. You think, then, monsieur," continued Friard, turning towards the stranger, "that there will be no tumult on the Grève?"

"I? I never said anything of the sort."

"I do not pretend that you said so," continued Friard, in a tone he endeavored to render subtle, "I pretend that you thought so, that's all."

"And upon what do you found your surmise? are you a sorcerer, Monsieur Friard?"

"Why, he knows me!" exclaimed the bourgeois, in astonishment; "how does he know me?"

"Have I not named you two or three times?" said Miton, shrugging his shoulders like a man ashamed, before a stranger, of the lack of intelligence of his friend.

"Ah! it's true," said Friard, making an effort to understand, and succeeding, thanks to this effort; "on my word, it's true. Well, as he knows me he will reply. Monsieur," he continued, turning towards the stranger, "I believe you think there will be an uproar on the Place de Grève, seeing that if you did not think so, you would be there, whereas, on the contrary, you are here. Ha!"

This "Ha!" proved that neighbor Friard had attained, in his deduction, the farthest limits of his logic and his imagination.

"But, Monsieur Friard, since you think the contrary of what you think I think," replied the stranger, dwelling on the words already pronounced by his questioner, and repeated by himself, "why are you not at the Grève? It appears to me, however, that the spectacle is cheering enough for the friends of the king to crowd there. After this, perhaps, you will reply that you are not among the friends of the king, but among those of Monsieur de Guise, and that you are waiting here for the Lorraines, who, they say, are to invade Paris, and deliver M. de Salcede."

"No, monsieur," replied the little man, visibly terrified at the stranger's supposition; "no, I am waiting for my wife, Madame Nicole Friard, who has gone to take some twenty-four table-cloths to the priory of the Jacobins, having the honor of being laundress to Dom Modeste Gorenflot, abbé of the said priory of Jacobins. But, to return to the uproar of which my friend Miton was speaking, and in which I do not believe, nor you either, from what you say at least——"

"Neighbor, neighbor," exclaimed Miton, "see what is taking place."

Maitre Friard followed the direction of his companion's finger, and saw that besides the barriers, the closing of which had already so preoccupied their minds, they now closed the gate.

The gate being shut, a party of the Swiss took their station in front of the trench.

"How! how!" exclaimed Friard, turning pale; "the barrier is not sufficient, and they are now shutting the gate!"

"Well! what did I tell you?" replied Miton, also turning pale.

"It's queer, is it not?" said the stranger, laughing.

And in laughing, he exhibited, between his mustache and the beard of his chin, a double row of white and sharp teeth, which seemed marvellously well sharpened by the good use he made of them three or four times a day.

At the sight of this fresh precaution, a long murmur of surprise, and some cries of terror proceeded from the assembled mass which filled the approaches to the barrier.

"Clear the road, move back!" cried the imperative voice of an officer.

The manœuvre was executed at the same moment, but not without some difficulty; the men on horseback and the men in carts, compelled to retrograde, crushed some feet here and there, and broke the ribs of some among the crowd.

Women screamed, men swore, those who could fly did so, tumbling one over another.

"The Lorraines! the Lorraines!" cried a voice in the midst of this tumult.

The most terrible cry borrowed from the pallid vocabulary of fright would not have produced an effect more prompt and decisive than this one.

"The Lorraines!"

"Well! do you hear? do you see?" exclaimed the trembling Miton; "the Lorraines, the Lorraines, let us fly!"

"Fly! where to?" demanded Friard.

"Into this enclosure," said Miton, wounding his hands by seizing the thorns of the hedge on which the stranger was comfortably seated.

"Into this enclosure?" repeated Friard, "that is easier said than done, Maître Miton. I see no gap through which we can enter, and you cannot pretend to leap over the hedge, which is higher than I am."

"I shall attempt it," said Miton, "I shall attempt it," and he made fresh efforts.

"Ah! take care, then, my good woman," cried Friard

in the distressed tone of a man who begins to lose his senses ; “ your ass is treading on my heels. *Ouf !* Monsieur le Cavalier, just pay a little attention, your horse is going to kick. *Tudieu !* cartman, my friend, you will run the shaft of your cart through my ribs ! ”

While Maître Miton clung to the branches of the hedge in his attempts to get over, and neighbor Friard searched in vain for an opening through which he could creep, the stranger rose, simply opened the compass of his long legs, and with a movement as simple as that by which a horseman places himself in the saddle, passed his leg over the hedge without a single branch scratching his hose.

Maître Miton followed his example, but tore his in three places. It was not thus with Friard, who could pass neither over nor under, and stood uttering painful cries, in danger of being crushed by the mob, when the stranger extended his long arm, seized him by the collar of his doublet, and lifted him to the other side of the hedge as easily as if he had been a child.

“ Oh ! oh ! oh ! ” exclaimed Maître Miton, delighted at the spectacle, and following with his eyes the ascent and descent of his friend Maître Friard, “ you look like the sign of the great Absalom.”

“ *Ouf !* ” exclaimed Friard, on reaching the ground, “ let me look like whatever you will, here I am on the other side the hedge, thanks to Monsieur — ” and drawing himself up to observe the stranger, to whose breast he scarcely reached — “ Ah ! monsieur,” he continued, “ you are a veritable Hercules, word of honor, faith of Jean Friard ; your name, monsieur — the name of my saviour, the name of my friend ? ”

And the good man pronounced the last word with a deeply grateful heart.

“ My name is Briquet,” replied the stranger, “ Robert Briquet, at your service, monsieur.”

“ And you have already rendered me a considerable service, Monsieur Robert Briquet, I make bold to say ;

oh! my wife will bless you; but, by the way, my poor wife, oh! *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* she will be stifled in this crowd. Ah, cursed Swiss! only good to crush the people."

Neighbor Friard had scarcely finished this apostrophe, when he felt on his shoulder the weight of a hand as heavy as a block of stone.

He turned round to see who was audacious enough to make so free with him.

The hand was that of a Swiss.

"Should you like to be knocked down, my leetle friend?" said the robust soldier.

"We are bagged," exclaimed Friard.

"The devil take the hindmost!" added Miton.

And the pair, having room before them, (thanks to the friendly hedge,) took to their heels, followed by the ironical smiles and glances of the man with the long arms; who, having lost sight of them, approached the Swiss who was placed there on guard.

"Thy hand is firm, companion, it appears?"

"Why, faith! monsieur, not pad, not pad."

"So much the better, for it is an important matter, especially if the Lorraines should come, as they say."

"Dey vill not come."

"No?"

"No, not at all."

"Why do they close this gate, then? I do not understand it."

"You no vant to understand," replied the Swiss, laughing aloud at his jest.

"You are right, my comrade, very right," said Robert Briquet: "thank you."

And Robert Briquet left the Swiss to join another group, whilst the worthy Helvetian, checking his laugh, murmured:

"By Gott! *Ich glaube er spottet meiner. Was ist das viir ein mann, der sich erlaubet ein Schweitzer seiner konigliche majestaet auszulachen?*"

Which, translated into English, means :

“By the Lord ! I think he laughs at me. Who is this man, then, who dares laugh at one of his Majesty’s Swiss guards?”

CHAPTER II.

WHAT TOOK PLACE AT THE PORTE ST. ANTOINE.

ONE of those groups consisted of a considerable number of citizens surprised outside the city by that unexpected closing of the gates. These citizens surrounded four or five cavaliers of a very martial appearance, whom the closing of the gates greatly annoyed, as it seemed, for they cried with all their might :

“The gate ! the gate ! ”

These cries, repeated by all the spectators with additional energy, occasioned at this moment the confusion of Babel.

Robert Briquet advanced toward the group, and began shouting louder than any who had preceded him :

“The gate ! the gate ! ”

The result of this was, that one of the cavaliers, delighted at this vocal power, turned round, bowed to him, and said :

“Is it not disgraceful, monsieur, that they should close the gate of the city in open day, as though the Spaniards or the English were besieging Paris?”

Robert Briquet looked attentively at the speaker, who was a man between forty and forty-five years of age.

This man also appeared to be the principal personage in the group of three or four cavaliers.

The examination no doubt inspired Robert Briquet with confidence, for he immediately returned the salute, and replied :

"Yes, monsieur, you are right, ten times right, twenty times right, but," he added, "without being too curious, may I ask to what motive you attribute this measure?"

"*Pardieu!*" said a spectator, "the fear they have lest they will not be able to devour their Salcede!"

"*Cap de Biours!*" said a voice, "a sad mouthful."

Robert Briquet turned round to see whence came this voice whose accent indicated a stout Gascon, and he perceived a young man of twenty or twenty-five, who was resting his hand on the horse of one who appeared to be the leader.

The young man was bareheaded, no doubt having lost his cap in the *mêlée*.

Maître Briquet seemed to be an observer; but in general his observations were short, for he quickly turned his attention from the Gascon, whom he probably thought of little importance, to fix it on the cavalier.

"But," said the latter, "since they announce that this Salcede belongs to M. de Guise, it is not so very bad a ragout!"

"Bah! do they say that?" inquired the curious Gascon, opening his large eyes.

"Yes, they do," replied the cavalier, shrugging his shoulders; "but in these times they tell many idle stories."

"Ah! then you think, monsieur," hazarded Briquet, with his inquisitive eye and crafty smile, "that Salcede does not belong to M. de Guise?"

"I not only believe so, but I am sure of it," replied the cavalier. And seeing that Robert Briquet, getting closer to him, made a movement which meant, "Ah! ah!—and upon what ground do you make this statement?" he continued,

"Undoubtedly, if Salcede belonged to the *duke*, the duke would not have allowed him to be taken, or at all events, would not have allowed him to be carried from Brussels to Paris, bound hand and foot, without even trying to rescue him."

"An attempt to rescue him," said Briquet; "would be rather bold; for whether it succeeded or failed, it would have been an avowal on the duke's part that he had conspired against the Duke of Anjou."

"M. de Guise," sharply replied the cavalier, "would not have been restrained by this consideration, I am sure; therefore, as he has not defended Salcedo, it is certain that Salcedo did not belong to him."

"And yet excuse me if I insist," continued Briquet; "but it appears certain that Salcedo has spoken."

"Where?"

"Before the judges."

"No, not before the judges, monsieur, at the torture."

"Is it not the samething?" demanded Maître Briquet, in a manner which he vainly endeavored to render innocent.

"No, certainly, it is not the same; besides, they assert that he has spoken, but they do not repeat what he has said."

"You will excuse me again, monsieur," said Robert Briquet, "they do repeat it, and very lengthily too."

"And what has he said? let us hear," said the cavalier, impatiently; "as you seem so well informed, speak."

"I do not boast of being well informed, monsieur, since, on the contrary, I seek information from you," said Briquet.

"Come, let us understand each other," said the cavalier, more impatiently, "you say that Salcedo's words are repeated; what were these words? tell us."

"I cannot certify that they were his own words," said Robert Briquet, who seemed to take a pleasure in irritating the cavalier.

"But what are those attributed to him?"

"They pretend he has confessed that he conspired for M. de Guise."

"Against the King of France, no doubt; always the same song."

"Not against His Majesty the King of France, but against his Highness, Monseigneur the Duke d'Anjou."

"If he has confessed that——"

"Well?" demanded Robert Briquet.

"Well! he is a wretch," said the cavalier, knitting his brow.

"Yes," said Robert Briquet, softly; "but if he has done what he has confessed, he is a brave man. Ah! monsieur, the boots, the rack, and the thumb-screw will make honest people confess many things."

"Alas! you speak the truth, monsieur," said the cavalier, softening a little, and uttering a sigh.

"Bah!" interrupted the Gascon, who, by bending his head towards each of the speakers, had heard everything, "bah! boots, rack, nonsense; if Salcede has spoken he is a knave, and his patron another."

"Oh! oh," muttered the cavalier, who could not repress a movement of impatience, "you sing very loud, Monsieur le Gascon."

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"I sing the tune I like, *Cap de Bious!* so much the worse for those who do not like my song."

The cavalier started as if in anger.

"Peace!" said a mild, imperative voice, the owner of which Robert Briquet sought in vain to discover.

The cavalier seemed to make an effort to obey; he had not, however, the power of entirely restraining himself.

"Do you know those of whom you are speaking, monsieur?" he inquired of the Gascon.

"Do I know Salcede?"

"Yes."

"Not in the least."

"And the Duke de Guise?"

"Not a whit more."

"And the Duke d'Alençon?"

"Still less."

"Do you know that M. Salcede is a brave fellow?"

"So much the better; in that case he will dié bravely."

"And that when M. de Guise means to conspire, he will do so by himself?"

"*Cap de Bious!* what's that to me?"

"And that M. the Duke d'Anjou, formerly M. d'Alençon, has killed, or allowed to be killed, all those who are interested in him, La Mole, Coconas, Bussy, and the rest?"

"I care not for that."

"How! you do not care?"

"Mayneville! Mayneville!" murmured the same voice.

"No, to be sure. I know but one thing, *sang-dieu!* I have business in Paris this very morning, and because of this madman Salcedo, they shut the gates in my face! *Cap de Bious!* this Salcedo is a scoundrel, so are all those who, with him, have caused the gates to be closed."

"Oh! oh! here is a rough Gascon," murmured Robert Briquet, "and no doubt we shall see something curious."

But this something curious which the bourgeois expected did not happen. The cavalier, to whose face this last apostrophe had caused the blood to rush, lowered his tone, was silent, and swallowed his anger.

"You are right," said he; "woe to those who hinder us from entering Paris."

"Oh! oh!" said Robert Briquet to himself, he had lost neither the clouds on the features of the cavalier, nor the two appeals which had been made to his patience; "ah, ah! it seems I shall see something still more curious than what I expected."

As he made this reflection there was a sound of trumpets, and almost immediately the Swiss, breaking through the crowd, cleared the way with their halberds, as though they were dividing a gigantic *pâté* of larks, separating the groups into two compact masses which lined each side of the road, leaving the middle empty.

In this middle space, the officer of whom we have spoken, and to whose guardianship the gate seemed confided, passed up and down on his horse, and after a moment's

examination, which looked like a challenge, he ordered the trumpets to sound.

This was executed at the same moment, and caused silence to reign in these masses, a thing which we might have supposed impossible, after so much agitation and tumult.

And now the crier, dressed in a flowered tunic, wearing on his breast the scutcheon on which were embroidered the arms of the City of Paris, advanced with a paper in his hand, and read, in the nasal tone peculiar to this species :

“Let it be known to our good people of Paris, and its suburbs, that the gates are closed from this time until one o’clock after noon, and that no one can enter the city before that hour, and this by the will of the King and the vigilance of M. the Prévôt of Paris.”

The crier stopped to take breath. The crowd hastened to show its surprise and discontent by a loud hoot, which the crier, we must do him this justice, heard without flinching.

The officer made a sign with his hand, and silence reigned once more.

The crier continued without trouble and without hesitation, as though habit had steeled him against manifestations like the one to which he had just been exposed.

“There shall be excepted from this measure those who may present themselves bearers of a sign of recognition, or who may be well and duly summoned by letters and mandates.

“Given at the hotel of the Prévôt of Paris, on the express order of his Majesty, the 26th day of October, in the year of Our Lord 1585.

“Trumpets sound.”

The trumpets immediately gave forth their spirited notes.

Scarcely had the crier ceased speaking, when, behind the hedge of Swiss and soldiers, the crowd began to undulate, like a serpent whose rings swell and writhe.

"What does this mean?" asked the most peaceable of one another. "No doubt some fresh conspiracy."

"Oh! oh! It is to keep us out of Paris that the affair has been thus arranged," said the cavalier who had supported with so strange a patience the rebuffs of the Gascon, speaking to his companions in a low tone; "these Swiss, this crier, these bolts, these troops are for us. Upon my soul, I am proud of it."

"Make way! you others," cried the officer in charge of the detachment. "*Mille diables!* Room for those who have the right to pass."

"*Cap de Biours!* I know one who will pass, if all the bourgeois on earth were between him and the gate," said the Gascon, who by his rough answers, had won the admiration of Robert Briquet.

He elbowed his way through the crowd, and reached in an instant the empty space which had been formed, thanks to the Swiss, between the two masses of spectators.

We may fancy how all the looks were eagerly, and curiously, directed towards the man so highly favored as to enter, when it was enjoined to the others to remain outside.

But the Gascon troubled himself but little about these envious looks; he marched proudly, showing through his thin green doublet every muscle of his body, which seemed so many cords stretched by some interior machine. Below his seedy ruffles were to be seen about three inches of his dry and bony wrists; his eye was clear, his hair crisp and yellow, either naturally or by chance, for the dust had the greatest share in the color. His feet, large and supple, terminated legs as slender and nervous as those of a deer. Upon one of his hands only he had drawn a glove of embroidered leather, quite surprised at finding itself destined to protect the other skin rougher than itself; in his other hand he twirled a hazel switch.

For a moment he looked round him; then, supposing

that the officer of whom we have spoken was the leader of the troop, he walked straight to him.

The latter looked at him for some time without speaking.

The Gascon, without being in the least abashed, did the same.

"You have lost your hat, I think," he said to him.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is it in the crowd?"

"No! I had received a letter from my mistress, *Cap de Biours!* near the river, and was reading it about a mile from here, when suddenly a gust of wind carried away both my hat and my letter. I ran after the letter, although the button of my hat was a single diamond. I recovered my letter. When I returned for my hat, the wind had blown it into the river, and the river carried it into Paris. It will make the fortune of some poor devil—so much the better."

"So that you are bareheaded?"

"Oh, there are plenty of hats in Paris, *Cap de Biours!* I will purchase a more magnificent one, and place in it a diamond twice as large as the former."

The officer slightly shrugged his shoulders; but, imperceptible as was this movement, it did not escape the Gascon.

"If you please?" said he.

"You have a card?" demanded the officer.

"Certainly, I have one, and rather more than one."

"One will be sufficient, if it be the right one."

"Why, I am not mistaken," continued the Gascon, opening his enormous eyes; "no, *Cap de Biours!* I am not wrong; I have the pleasure of speaking to Monsieur de Loignac."

"It's possible, monsieur," dryly replied the officer, evidently not much delighted at this recognition.

"To Monsieur de Loignac, my compatriot?"

"I do not deny it."

"My cousin !"

"Good ! Your card."

"Here it is."

The Gascon drew from his glove the half of a card, artistically cut.

"Follow me," said Loignac, without looking at the card. "You and your companions, if you have any ; we will verify the passport."

And he took his post near the gate.

The bareheaded Gascon obeyed ; five other individuals followed him. The first was adorned with a magnificent cuirass, so marvellous in its work that it might have come from the hands of Benvenuto Cellini. But as the make of the cuirass was somewhat old-fashioned, its magnificence attracted more laughter than admiration.

It is true that no other portion of the costume of the individual in question corresponded with the almost royal splendor of the prospectus.

The second who kept pace was followed by a tall gray-headed lackey, who, thin and sunburnt as he was, seemed the precursor of Sancho Panza, as his master might have passed for that of Don Quixote.

The third appeared, carrying an infant of ten months old in his arms, and followed by a woman, who clung to his leather belt, whilst two other children, one four, the other five years old, held to her dress.

The fourth appeared, limping, and attached to a large sword.

And lastly, to close the march, a young man, of handsome presence, advanced on a black horse, dusty, but of a good breed.

The latter looked like a king by the side of the others.

Compelled to move slowly that he might not pass his colleagues, perhaps, in addition, inwardly satisfied not to walk too close to them, the young man remained for a moment on the limits of the hedge formed by the people.

At this instant he felt a sudden pull at the scabbard of his sword, and turned round.

The individual who had thus attracted his attention was a young man, with black hair and sparkling eyes, small, frail, graceful, and with gloved hands.

"What can I do for you, monsieur?" demanded our cavalier.

"A favor, monsieur."

"Speak, but speak quickly, I pray you: you see they are waiting for me."

"I wish to enter the city, monsieur; an imperative necessity demands my presence there. You on your part are alone, and want a page who will do honor to your handsome face."

"Well?"

"Well! let me enter, I will be your page."

"Thank you," said the cavalier; "but I do not wish to be served by any one."

"Not even by me?" said the young man, with such a strange smile, that the cavalier felt the icy reserve in which he had tried to close his heart melting away.

"I meant that I could not maintain a page."

"Yes, I know you are not rich, Monsieur Ernauton de Carmainges," said the young page.

The cavalier started, but, without paying attention to this movement, the youth continued:

"We will not, therefore, talk about wages; and it is you, on the contrary, who, if you grant me what I have requested, will be paid, and that a hundredfold, for the services you may render me. Allow me, then, to serve you, and remember that he who now begs has often commanded."

"Come, then," said the cavalier, subdued by the tone of mingled persuasion and authority.

The young man pressed his hand, which was a very familiar action for a page, and turning towards the group of cavaliers whom we have already mentioned:

"I shall pass," he said; "that is the most important thing; you, Mayneville, endeavor to do the same, by any means whatever."

"It is not enough that you should pass," replied the gentleman: "he must see you."

"Oh! be easy; once let me pass this gate and he will see me."

"Do not forget the sign agreed upon."

"Two fingers on the lips, is it not?"

"Yes. Now may Heaven assist you."

"Well!" said the owner of the black horse, "monsieur le page, are you ready?"

"I am here, master," replied the young man; and he vaulted nimbly on the horse behind his companion, who rejoined the five other chosen ones, occupied in exhibiting their cards, and proving their rights.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Robert Briquet, who had followed them with his eyes, "here's a whole arrival of Gascons, or the devil fetch me!"

CHAPTER III.

THE REVIEW.

THE examination to which were subjected the six privileged individuals, whom we have seen issuing from the ranks of the people, on approaching the gate, was neither very long nor very complicated.

It consisted in taking the half of a card from the pocket and presenting it to the officer, who compared it with another half; and if, on comparing them, the two halves agreed and made a whole, the rights of the owner of the card were established.

The Gascon with the bare head advanced first. The review, therefore, began with him.

"Your name?" demanded the officer.

"My name! Monsieur l'officier; it is written on the card, on which you will also see something else."

"Never mind; your name?" repeated the officer, impatiently, "don't you know your name?"

"Do I know it? Of course I do, *Cap de Biours!* and if I had forgotten it, you could have reminded me of it, since we are compatriots, and even cousins."

"Your name? *mille diables!* do you fancy I can waste my time in recognitions?"

"Very good! My name is Perducas de Pincornay."

"Perducas de Pincornay," repeated M. de Loignac, to whom we shall henceforth give the name by which his compatriot had saluted him, casting his eyes on the card: "Perducas de Pincornay, 26th October, 1585, at noon precisely."

"Porte Saint Antoine," added the Gascon, extending his dry and dusky finger over the card.

"Very well! it is all right; enter," said M. de Loignac, to cut short any further dialogue between him and his countryman. "Now for you!" he said to the second.

The man with the cuirass approached.

"Your card?" demanded Loignac.

"Eh, what! M. de Loignac," he exclaimed, "don't you recognize the son of one of the friends of your youth, whom you have twenty times danced on your knee?"

"No."

"Pertinax de Monterabeau," replied the young man with astonishment, "you do not recognize him?"

"When I am on duty I recognize no one. Your card, monsieur."

The young man drew forth his card.

"Pertinax de Monterabeau, 26th October, noon precisely, Porte Saint Antoine; pass."

The young man passed, and, a little perplexed at his reception, rejoined Perducas, who waited for the gates to be opened.

The third Gascon approached; the one with the wife and children.

"Your card?" demanded Loignac.

His obedient hand at once plunged into a little leather bag which he wore on the right side.

But it was in vain; encumbered as he was with the child in his arms he could not find the paper he wanted.

"What the devil are you doing with that child? You see plainly he is in your way!"

"He is my son, Monsieur de Loignac."

"Well! put your son on the ground."

The Gascon obeyed, the child began to howl.

"You are married then?" demanded Loignac.

"Yes, monsieur."

"At twenty?"

"They marry young in our parts; you know it well, Monsieur de Loignac, you who were married at eighteen."

"Oh!" said Loignac; "here is another who knows me."

In the meantime the woman had approached, and the children hanging to her gown had followed her.

"And why should he not be married?" she asked, drawing herself up and pushing back from her brow the black hair, which the dust from the road had fixed there like a crust; "is it out of fashion to marry in Paris? Yes, monsieur, he is married, and here are two other children who call him father."

"Yes, but they are only the sons of my wife, Monsieur de Loignac, as well as this great boy who keeps himself behind. Advance, Militor, and salute Monsieur de Loignac, our compatriot."

A lad about sixteen or seventeen years of age, strong, active, and with his round eye and hooked nose, resembling a falcon, approached, his two hands passed into his buff leather belt. He was dressed in a good cassock of knitted wool, wore on his muscular legs chamois leather breeches, and a precocious mustache shaded his upper lip, at once impudent and sensual.

"This is Militor, my step-son, Monsieur de Loignac, the eldest son of my wife, who is a Chavantrade, a relation of the Loignacs. Militor de Chavantrade, at your service. Salute, Militor."

And stooping towards the infant who was rolling and crying on the ground—

"Be quiet, Scipio, be quiet, my child," he added, fumbling in every pocket for his card.

During this time Militor, to obey the injunction of his father, slightly bowed without removing his hands from his belt.

"For the love of heaven, your card, monsieur!" exclaimed Loignac, impatiently.

"Come here and assist me, Lardille," said the blushing Gascon to his wife.

Lardille loosened, one after another, the two hands clinging to her frock, and searched, herself, the pouch and the pockets of her husband. But uselessly.

"Well!" she said, "we must have lost it."

"In that case, I must arrest you," said Loignac.

The Gascon turned pale.

"My name is Eustache de Miradoux," said he; "and I am recommended by M. de Sainte Maline, my relative."

"Ah! you are related to M. de Sainte Maline?" said Loignac, a little softened. "It is true, that if we listened to them, they are related to the whole world. Well, search again; and search to some purpose."

"Look, Lardille, look into the clothes of your children," said Eustache, trembling with vexation and alarm.

Lardille knelt down before a modest bundle which she rummaged over, murmuring all the time.

The young Scipio continued to roll and scream: it is true that his step-brothers, finding they were not being noticed, amused themselves by pouring sand into his mouth.

Militor did not budge. One would have said the miseries of family life passed over or under this great youth without reaching him.

"Eh!" said M. de Loignac, suddenly, "what do I see there wrapped in leather, on the sleeve of that block-head?"

"Yes, yes, that's it," exclaimed Eustache, triumphantly; "'twas an idea of Lardille's—I remember it now, she sewed the card on Militor."

"That he might carry something," said Loignac, ironically. "Fie, the great calf! he can't even leave his arms at liberty, fearing he should have to carry them."

Militor's lips grew pale with rage, whilst in his face the blood showed itself on the nose, chin, eyebrows.

"A calf has no arms," he grumbled, looking daggers: "he has paws, like certain animals of my acquaintance."

"Peace!" said Eustache, "you know, Militor, that M. de Loignac is doing us the honor of jesting with us."

"No, *pardieu*, I am not jesting," replied Loignac, "on the contrary, I wish the great rogue to take my words as I said them. If he were my step-son, I would make him carry mother, brother, bundle and, *corbleu*, I would mount on the top of all, just to stretch his ears and prove to him he is nothing but an ass."

Militor lost all countenance; Eustache seemed uneasy; but under this uneasiness there beamed a sort of joy at the humiliation inflicted on his step-son.

Lardille, to remove all difficulties, and save her first-born from the sarcasms of M. de Loignac, presented the card disencumbered of its leather envelope to the officer.

M. de Loignac took it and read it.

"Eustache de Miradoux, 26th October, noon precisely, Porte Saint Antoine."

"Pass on," said he, "and see that you don't forget any of your brats, ugly or handsome."

Eustache de Miradoux took the young Scipio in his arms; Lardille again fastened to his girdle; the two children seized their mother's robe, and this family bunch, followed by the silent Militor, ranged themselves near those who waited after the required examination.

"*Peste!*" murmured Loignac between his teeth, watching Eustache de Miradoux and his train making their evolutions, "a queer lot of soldiers Monsieur d'Epernon will have there."

And, turning round—

"Come, you are next!" he said.

These words were addressed to the fourth candidate.

He was alone and very prim, bringing together his thumb and middle finger to give a flip to his iron-gray doublet and shake the dust from it; his mustache, which seemed made of cat's hairs, his green sparkling eyes, his eyebrows, the arch of which formed a half circle over two protruding eyeballs, lastly his thin lips, impressed his physiognomy with that type of mistrust and parsimonious reserve by which we can recognize the man who conceals the length of his purse as well as the depth of his heart.

"Chalabre, 26th October, noon precisely, Porte Saint Antoine."

"Right, go!" said Loignac.

"I presume the expense of the journey will be allowed," mildly observed the Gascon.

"I am not treasurer, monsieur," said Loignac, dryly, "I am only porter; pass."

Chalabre passed.

Behind Chalabre came a cavalier, young and fair-haired, who, on drawing out his card, dropped from his pocket a thimble and several figured cards.

He declared his name to be Saint Capautel, and his declaration was confirmed by his card, which was all right. He followed Chalabre.

There remained the sixth, who, on the injunction of the extempore page, had dismounted from his horse, and exhibited to M. de Loignac a card on which was written:

"Ernauton de Carmainges, 26th October, noon precisely, Porte Saint Antoine."

While M. de Loignac read, the page, having also dis-

mounted, endeavored to conceal his face by pretending to adjust the saddle of his false master's horse.

"The page belongs to you?" inquired Loignac of Ernauton, pointing with his finger to the young man.

"You see, Monsieur le Capitaine," said Ernauton, who would neither betray nor lie; "you see that he is bridling my horse."

"Pass," said Loignac, examining with attention M. de Carmainges, whose figure and dress appeared to him more in keeping than those of the others.

"Here is one endurable one, at any rate," he murmured.

Ernauton remounted his horse; the page, quickly but without affectation, had preceded him, and had already mingled in the group of those before him.

"Open the gate," said Loignac, "and allow these six persons and their suite to pass."

"Come, quick, quick, my master," said the page; "in saddle, and let us start."

Ernauton again yielded to the ascendancy exercised over him by this strange creature, and the gate being opened, he spurred his horse, and guided by the indications of the page plunged into the very heart of the Faubourg Saint Antoine.

Loignac ordered the gate to be closed upon the six chosen individuals, to the great discontent of the crowd, which supposed there would be no difficulty in getting in after this formality had been gone through. Finding their expectation deceived they loudly proclaimed their dissatisfaction.

Maître Miton, who after a terrified race over the fields, had slowly recovered his courage, sounding the ground at every step, ended by returning to the place from which he had started; Maître Miton, we say, hazarded some complaints on the arbitrary fashion in which the soldiers intercepted the communications.

Neighbor Friard, who had succeeded in finding his wife,

and, now protected by her, seemed perfectly fearless, narrated to his better half the news of the day, enriched by his own commentaries.

At length the cavaliers, one of whom had been called Mayneville by the little page, took counsel whether they should not turn the wall of the enclosure, in the well-founded hope of finding some breach, by which they could enter Paris, without the necessity of presenting themselves any longer before the Porte Saint Antoine, or at any other.

Robert Briquet, like the philosopher who analyzes and knows how to extract the essence, discovered that the dénouement of the scene we have described would take place near the gate, while the conversations of the cavaliers, the bourgeois, and the peasants, would give him no more information.

He therefore approached a small shed which served as a porter's lodge, and which was lighted by two windows, the one looking towards Paris, the other into the country.

Scarcely had he settled himself at his new post, when a man, hastening from Paris at a swift gallop, jumped from his horse, and, entering the lodge, appeared at the window.

"Ah! ah!" said Loignac.

"Here I am, Monsieur de Loignac," said the man.

"Good, where do you come from?"

"From the Porte Saint Victor."

"Your number?"

"Five."

"The cards?"

"Are here."

Loignac took the cards, verified them, and wrote on a slate, which seemed to have been prepared for that purpose, the number five.

The messenger departed.

Five minutes had not elapsed when two other messengers arrived.

Loignac questioned them successively, and always through his wicket.

One came from the Porte du Temple, and announced the number six.

The other from the Porte Bourdelle, and brought the number four.

Loignac carefully wrote these numbers on his slate.

These messengers disappeared like the first, and then came four others.

The first from the Porte Saint Denis, with the number five.

The second from the Porte Saint Jacques, with the number three.

The third from Porte Saint Honoré, with the number eight.

The fourth from the Porte Montmartre, with the number four.

Lastly appeared one from the Porte Bussy, announcing four.

Loignac then carefully wrote out in lines, the following places and figures.

Porte Saint Victor.....	5
Porte Bourdelle.....	4
Porte du Temple	6
Porte Saint Denis.....	5
Porte Saint Jacques.....	3
Porte Saint Honoré.....	8
Porte Montmartre	4
Porte Bussy	4
Porte Saint Antoine.....	6
Total (Forty-five).....	45

“Good! Now,” cried Loignac in a loud voice, “open the gates, and all may enter.”

The gates were opened.

Immediately horses, mules, women, children, carts, rushed into Paris, at the risk of being stifled in the

narrow space between the two pillars of the draw-bridge.

In a quarter of an hour the whole mass of this populous tide, which, since the morning, had been held back by this momentary dyke, poured through the vast artery called the Rue de Saint Antoine.

The murmurs died away by degrees.

M. de Loignac remounted his horse with his men.

Robert Briquet, remaining to the last after being the first, philosophically strode over the chain of the bridge, saying :

“All these people wished to see something, and they have seen nothing, even in their own business ; I wished to see nothing, and I am the only one who has seen anything. It is very amusing—let us continue ; but what good to continue ? I know enough of it, *pardieu !* Will it be very advantageous to me to see M. de Salcedo torn into four quarters ? No, *pardieu !* Besides, I have renounced politics.

“I shall go to dinner : the sun would mark mid-day if there were a sun ; it is time,” he said, and entered Paris with his easy and malicious smile.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STAND OF HIS MAJESTY KING HENRY THE THIRD, ON THE PLACE DE GREVE.

If we now follow to the Place de Grève, where it ends, this populous thoroughfare of the quarter Saint Antoine, we shall find amongst the crowd several of our acquaintances ; but while all these poor citizens, not so wise as Robert Briquet, are pushing, elbowing, and fighting each other, we prefer (thanks to the privilege our historical wings give us) to transport ourselves to the *place* itself,

and when we have embraced the whole spectacle at one glance, return for an instant to the past, in order that we may examine the cause after having contemplated the effect.

We might say that Maître Friard was right when he calculated at 100,000 men, at least, the number of spectators who would crowd into the Place de Grève and its neighborhood, to enjoy the spectacle which was being prepared there. All Paris appeared to have a rendezvous at the Hôtel de Ville, and Paris is very exact. Paris never misses a *fête*; and it is a *fête*, and a very extraordinary one, that of the death of a man, especially when he has succeeded in exciting so many passions that some curse and others bless him, while the greater number pity him.

The spectator who might succeed in reaching the *place*, whether from the quay near the cabaret of the image of Notre Dame, or from the porch of the Place Beaudoyer, would at first perceive, in the middle of the Grève, the archers of the lieutenant, Tanchon, and a good number of Swiss and light horse surrounding a small scaffold raised about four feet.

This scaffold was so low that it was visible only to those immediately around it, or to those who had windows overlooking the place. The favored ones had been waiting for the culprit, who, since the morning, had been in the hands of the priests, and for whom, according to the energetic expression of the people, his horses waited, to take him the long journey.

In fact, under an archway of the first house beyond the Rue du Mouton, on the place, four vigorous Percheron horses, with white manes and hairy legs, stamped impatiently on the pavement, bit one another, and neighed, to the great terror of the women who had chosen this place of their own accord, or had been driven there by the crowd.

The horses were fresh ones; scarcely had they done more on the grassy plains of their native country than

sometimes carry home, on their broad backs, the chubby infant of some sturdy peasant delayed in his return from the fields till the sun had set.

But after the empty scaffold, after the neighing steeds, that which attracted, in a more constant degree, the looks of this crowd, was the principal window at the Hôtel de Ville, draped with gold and rich velvet, and from the balcony of which hung a velvet carpet, ornamented with the royal arms.

In fact, this window was for the king. St. Jean en Grève struck half-past one when the window was filled with personages, like a picture within its frame.

The first was the king, Henry the Third, pale, nearly bald, although at this period he was not more than thirty-four or thirty-five years of age; his eyes deep sunk in their darkened orbits, and his mouth trembling with nervous contractions.

He entered, dejected; with a fixed gaze at once majestic, and unsteady, singular in his dress, singular in his carriage; a shadow rather than a living being; a spectre rather than a king; a mystery always incomprehensible and always misunderstood by his subjects, who, seeing him appear, knew not whether to cry "Vive le roi!" or "Pray for his soul."

Henry was dressed in a black doublet embroidered in fringe; he wore neither order nor jewels, a single diamond sparkled in his cap, serving as a clasp to three short curled feathers. In his left hand he held a little black dog, which his sister-in-law, Mary Stuart, had sent him from her prison, and upon whose silky coat shone his small white fingers, like fingers of alabaster.

Behind him came Catharine de Medicis, already bent with age, for the queen-mother might, at this period, have been sixty-five or sixty-seven years of age; still she carried her head firm and erect, darting sharp looks beneath her frowning eyebrows, and, despite this look, always cold and pale as a statue of wax in her weeds of eternal mourning.

Near her appeared the mild and melancholy face of Queen Louise de Lorraine, wife of Henry the Third, in appearance an insignificant companion, but in reality faithful to him in his stormy and troubled life.

The queen-mother, Catharine de Medicis, marched to a triumph.

The queen, Louise, assisted at an execution.

King Henry was attending to business.

This triple shade might be read on the haughty brow of the first, on the resigned countenance of the second, and in the clouded and weary air of the third.

In the train of these illustrious individuals whom the people admired, followed two handsome young men, the one about twenty and the other twenty-five, at the most.

They each had an arm around the other in defiance of the etiquette which forbids, in the presence of majesty—as in church, before God—that men should seem attached to anything.

They smiled.

The youngest with ineffable sadness, the other with enchanting grace. They were handsome, they were tall, they were brothers.

The youngest was named Henri de Joyeuse, Count du Bouchage; the other, the Duke Anne de Joyeuse. A short while before he had been known at court by the name of Arques, but King Henry, who loved him above everything, had, about a year previously, created him a peer of France, by making a dukedom of the earldom of Joyeuse.

The people had for these favorites of the king none of the hatred it felt for Maugiron, Quelus, and Schomberg, a hatred of which D'Epéron was sole heir.

The people therefore greeted the prince and the two brothers with modest but flattering acclamations.

Henry saluted the crowd gravely and without a smile; he then kissed his little dog on the head, and turning round towards the two young men:

"Lean your back against the tapestry, Anne," said he to the eldest; "don't fatigue yourself by remaining standing; it may last a long time."

"I hope so truly," interrupted Catharine, "long and good, sire."

"You think then that Salcede will speak, mother?" said Henry.

"God will, I trust, give this confusion to our enemies. I say our enemies, for they are your enemies also, my daughter," she added, turning towards the queen, who turned pale, and bent her gentle glance to the ground.

The king shook his head in token of doubt.

And turning a second time towards Joyeuse, and seeing that the latter remained standing, notwithstanding his invitation :

"Come, Anne," said he, "do as I said; place your back against the wall, or lean on my chair."

"Your majesty is really too good," said the young duke, "and I shall not profit by the permission until I am somewhat fatigued."

"And we will not wait till you are, eh, brother?" said Henry, in a whisper.

"You need not be uneasy," replied Anne, with his eyes rather than his voice.

"My son," said Catharine, "do I not see a tumult below there, at the corner of the quay?"

"What a clear sight you have, mother. Yes, in fact, I think you are right. Oh! what bad eyes I have, yet I am not old."

"Sire," interrupted Joyeuse freely, "the uproar arises from the crowding of the populace by the company of archers. It is the condemned man who arrives, most certainly."

"How flattering it is to kings," said Catharine, "to view the quartering of a man who has a drop of royal blood in his veins."

And in saying these words her glance fell upon Louise.

"Oh! madame, pardon me, spare me!" said the young queen, with a despair she strove in vain to conceal; "no! this monster is not of my family, and you could not mean to say he is."

"No, certainly!" said the king; "and I am quite certain my mother did not mean to say so."

"Eh! but," said Catharine, sharply, "he belongs to the Lorraines, and the Lorraines are yours, madame; at least I think so. This Salcede is therefore connected with you, and closely."

"Which means," interrupted Joyeuse, with an honest indignation which was the distinctive trait of his character, and which showed itself on every occasion against the person who excited it, whoever he might be; "which means that he is connected with M. de Guise, perhaps, but not with the Queen of France."

"Ah! you are there, Monsieur de Joyeuse?" said Catharine with an indescribable haughtiness, returning a humiliation for a contradiction. "Ah! you are there. I had not seen you."

"I am here not only with the permission, but also by order of the king, madame," replied Joyeuse, looking at Henry the Third. "It is not so amusing to see a man quartered, that I should witness such a spectacle, if I were not forced to it."

"Joyeuse is right, madame," said the king; "here, it concerns neither the Lorraines nor the Guises, and especially not the queen. We are here to see separated into four quarters, M. de Salcede, that is to say, an assassin who would have killed my brother."

"I am unlucky to-day," said Catharine, suddenly yielding, which was her most skilful mode of attack; "I have made my daughter weep, and, may God pardon me, I think I have made M. de Joyeuse laugh."

"Ah! madame," exclaimed Louise, seizing Catharine's hands: "is it possible that your majesty despises my grief?"



HENRY III.

"And my profound respect," added Anne de Joyeuse, leaning on the arms of the royal arm-chair.

"It's true, it's true," replied Catharine, burying another shaft in the heart of her daughter-in-law; "I ought to know how painful it is for you, my dear child, to see the plots of your relatives of Lorraine made public, and although you may not be in sympathy with them, you will not the less suffer for this relationship."

"Ah, as for that, mother, it is somewhat true;" said the king, endeavoring to make peace amongst them, "this time we know what to think of M. de Guise's share in this plot."

"But, sire," interrupted Louise de Lorraine, more boldly than she had yet done, "your majesty well knows that in becoming Queen of France, I left my relations far below the throne."

"Ah!" exclaimed Anne de Joyeuse, "you see that I was not mistaken, sire; here is the sufferer, who appears on the place! *Corbleu*, what a villanous face!"

"He is frightened," said Catharine, "he will speak."

"If he has the strength," said the king. "See, mother, his head falls about like that of a corpse."

"I see it, sire," said Joyeuse, "it is frightful."

"How could a man be handsome whose thoughts are so ugly? Have I not explained to you, Anne, the secret connection of the physical and the moral characteristics as Hippocrates and Galenus understood them, and explained them?"

"I admit it, sire; but I am not a pupil equal to yourself, and I have sometimes seen very ugly men make very brave soldiers. Is it not so, Henri?"

Joyeuse turned towards his brother as if to get his support, but Henri looked without seeing, listened without hearing; he was buried in a deep reverie. It was the king, therefore, who replied for him.

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* my dear Anne," he exclaimed, "who tells you that this one is not brave? He is brave, *par-*

dieu, like a bear, a wolf, or a serpent. Do you not remember his deeds? He burned in his house a Norman gentleman, his enemy; he has fought ten times, and killed three of his adversaries; he has been caught in the act of counterfeiting money, and condemned to death for this act."

"In token of which," said Catharine de Medicis, "he was pardoned by the intercession of M. le Duc de Guise, your cousin, my daughter."

This time Louise had lost her strength: she contented herself with heaving a deep sigh.

"Come," said Joyeuse, "this is a well-filled life which will soon be finished."

"I hope, Monsieur de Joyeuse," said Catharine, "that it will, on the contrary, be finished as slowly as possible."

"Madame," said Joyeuse, shaking his head, "I see down there under the awning, those four stout horses who appear to me so impatient of their state of inactivity that I do not believe in a long resistance of the muscles, tendons and cartilages of M. de Salcede."

"Yes, if they do not provide against such a case; but my son is merciful," added the queen with one of those smiles peculiar to herself alone, "he will tell the assistants to draw gently."

"And yet, madame," timidly objected the younger queen, "I heard you say this morning to Madame de Mercœur, at least I thought so, that the miserable wretch would suffer only two draws."

"Just so, if he conducts himself well," said Catharine: "in that case he will be dispatched as quickly as possible; but you hear, my daughter, and as you interest yourself so much in him you had better let him know as much. If he conducts himself well, that is his affair."

"My only reason was, madame," said Louise, "that Providence not having blessed me with your strength, I am not very anxious to witness sufferings."

"Well! you may look away, my daughter."

Louise was silent.

The king had heard nothing : he was all eyes. They were occupied in lifting the culprit from the cart which had brought him, to place him on the small scaffold.

During this time, the halberdiers, the archers, and the Swiss had considerably cleared the space, so that round the scaffold there was sufficient room for every eye to distinguish Salcede, despite the slight elevation of his funeral pedestal.

Salcede was about thirty-four or thirty-five years of age; he was strong and active; the pallid features of his countenance, upon which rested a few drops of blood and sweat, were animated as he looked around him by an indescribable expression, sometimes of hope, sometimes of despair.

At first he cast his eyes towards the royal party, but as if he comprehended that in lieu of life, it was death that came from that quarter, his gaze did not rest there.

It was in the multitude, in the midst of that stormy sea that he searched with burning eyes, his soul trembling on his lips.

The crowd gave him no sign.

Salcede was no common assassin; Salcede in the first place was of good birth, since Catharine de Medicis, who had a much better knowledge of genealogy than she pretended, had discovered a drop of royal blood in his veins; besides, Salcede had been a captain of some renown. That hand, bound by a disgraceful cord, had valiantly wielded a sword; that livid head, on which were painted the terrors of death, terrors which doubtless the victim would have buried in the depths of his soul had not hope still lingered there—that head had conceived some great designs.

From what we have said it resulted that for many of the spectators Salcede was a hero; in the opinion of many others he was a victim; some really looked upon him as an assassin, but the crowd rarely despises as ordinary criminals those who have attempted great murders, which

are registered on the page of history, as well as on that of justice.

Thus they narrated that Salcedo was born of a race of warriors, that his father had fought against M. the Cardinal de Lorraine, which had cost him a glorious death in the midst of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, but that the son, forgetful of this death, or rather sacrificing his hatred to a certain ambition, for which the populace has always some sympathy, that this son, we said, had entered into a compact with Spain and the Guises, to annihilate in Flanders the increasing power of the Duke of Anjou, so much hated by the French.

They mentioned his relations with Baza and Balouin, the suspected authors of the conspiracy, which had nearly cost the life of Duke Francis, brother of Henry the Third : they admired the cleverness he had displayed in all these proceedings to escape the wheel, the gibbet, and the stake, still smoking with the blood of his accomplices. He alone, by revelations, false and full of artifice, as the Lorraines said, allured his judges to such a point, that, to know more, the Duke of Anjou spared him for the moment, and had him conducted to France, instead of having him beheaded at Antwerp or Brussels. It is true that the object was the same ; but on the journey, which was the result of his revelations, Salcedo hoped to be liberated by his partisans ; unfortunately for him, he had reckoned without M. de Bellièvre, who kept such a good watch that neither Spaniards nor Lorraines nor Leaguers were able to approach.

In prison Salcedo had hoped ; at the torture Salcedo had hoped ; in the cart he had still hoped, and on the scaffold hope had not deserted him. It was not that he lost his courage, or failed in resignation, but he was one of those creatures who defend themselves to the last breath with that tenacity and vigor seldom attained by minds less strongly organized.

Nor did the king, any more than the people, lose this incessant thought of Salcedo.

Catharine, on her part, studied with anxiety the slightest movement of the unfortunate young man ; but she was at too great a distance to follow the direction of his eyes, and notice their continual play.

On the arrival of the culprit, there rose, in the crowd, lines of men, women and children. Each time that he perceived a fresh head above the moving level, already measured by his vigilant eye, Salcede analyzed it completely in a second, which sufficed as well as an hour to his over-excited organization ; time had now become so precious, that it increased tenfold, aye a hundredfold, all the faculties.

After the glance, the flash darted upon the fresh and unknown face, Salcede would become sullen, and turn his attention elsewhere.

The executioner, however, had commenced taking possession of him, and bound him by the middle of his body to the centre of the scaffold.

Already, even, on a sign from Maître Tanchon, lieutenant of the short robe, and superintendent of the execution, two archers, squeezing through the crowd, had gone to seek the horses.

Under any other circumstances, or with any other intention, the archers would not have been able to move a step through the midst of this compact mass ; but the crowd knew what the archers were going for ; they drew aside and made way, as on a crowded stage there is always room for the actors playing the principal parts.

At this moment there was some noise at the door of the royal room, and the usher, raising the tapestry, informed their majesties that the president, Brisson, and four councillors, one of whom was the reporter of the case, desired the honor of a moment's conversation with the king on the subject of the execution.

"Very well," said the king.

And turning towards Catharine :

"Well, mother," he continued, "you will be satisfied?"

Catharine slightly bowed her head, by way of approbation.

"Introduce these gentlemen," said the king.

"Sire, a favor," demanded Joyeuse.

"Speak, Joyeuse," said the king, "and provided it be not the pardon of the culprit——"

"Reassure yourself, sire."

"I am listening."

"Sire, there is one thing which particularly wounds my brother, and especially myself, that is seeing the red robes and the black robes ; will your majesty, therefore, be good enough to permit us to retire ? "

"What! you take so little interest in my affairs, M. de Joyeuse, that you ask to retire at such a moment?" exclaimed Henry.

"Do not believe it, sire ; whatever touches your majesty has a deep interest for me ; but I am of a miserable organization, and the weakest woman is, on this point, stronger than I am. I cannot see an execution without being ill for a week, and as I am the only person who ever laughs at the Louvre, since my brother, I know not why, has given it up, consider what would become of the poor Louvre, already so gloomy if I were also to become sad. Thus, sire, for pity's——"

"You would leave me, Anne?" said Henry, in a tone of sadness.

"*Peste*, sire, you are insatiate ; an execution *en Grève*, that is, vengeance and a show at the same time ; a spectacle, of which, unlike myself, you are most fond ; vengeance and a spectacle do not suffice you, and you must at the same time enjoy the weakness of your friends."

"Remain, Joyeuse, remain ; you will see that it is interesting."

"I do not doubt it ; I even fear, as I have told your majesty, that the interest will be carried to a point that I cannot bear ; therefore, with your permission, sire——" And Joyeuse made a movement towards the door.

"Well! well!" said Henry the Third, sighing, "have your own way; my destiny is to live alone."

And the king, with a clouded brow, turned to his mother, fearing she had heard the colloquy which had passed between him and his favorite.

Catharine's hearing was as good as her sight, but when she did not wish to hear, no ear was closer than hers.

In the meantime, Joyeuse had stooped to his brother and said to him:

"Quick, quick! Du Bouchage. While these councillors are entering, slip behind their large robes, and let us escape; the king says 'yes,' now, in five minutes he will say 'no.'"

"Thanks! thanks! brother," replied the young man, "I was, like you, in a hurry to leave."

"Come, come, the vultures are appearing; disappear, tender nightingale."

In fact, behind the councillors, the two young men might be seen flying like two rapid shadows.

Upon them fell the heavy tapestry.

When the king turned round, they had already disappeared.

Henry heaved a deep sigh, and kissed his little dog.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXECUTION.

THE councillors remained standing at the lower end of the room, silently waiting for the king to address them.

The king allowed them to wait for a moment, then, turning towards them:

"Well, gentlemen, what news?" he said. "Good-morning, Monsieur Brisson."

"Sire," replied the president, with the easy dignity which was called at court his Huguenot courtesy, "we come to supplicate your majesty—in compliance with M. de Thou's wishes, to beg your majesty to prolong the life of the condemned. No doubt he has some revelations to make; and, by promising him his life, we shall obtain them."

"But," said the king, "have they not obtained them, Monsieur le President?"

"Yes, sire, in part—is that sufficient for your majesty?"

"I know what I know, monsieur."

"Your majesty then knows what to think of the participation of Spain in this affair?"

"Of Spain? Yes, Monsieur le President, and also of many other powers?"

"It will be important to verify this participation, sire."

"And therefore," interrupted Catharine, "the king has determined, Monsieur le President, to defer the execution, if the culprit will sign a confession substantiating his depositions under the torture."

Brisson questioned the king with his eyes.

"Such is my intention," said Henry, "and I no longer conceal it. You may be assured of it, Monsieur Brisson, and have it mentioned to the prisoner by your lieutenant of the robe."

"Your majesty has nothing further to add?"

"Nothing. Only there must be no variation in the confessions, or I withdraw my promise. They are public—they must be complete."

"Yes, sire, with the names of the compromised parties?"

"With the names—all the names."

"Even should the prisoner's confession implicate these names in high treason and revolt against the chief head?"

"Even should these names be those of my nearest relatives!" said the king.

"It shall be done as your majesty orders."

"I shall make myself clear, Monsieur Brisson. Let

there be no mistake. You will carry pens and paper to the prisoner. He will write his confession; thereby publicly showing that he throws himself upon our mercy. Afterwards, we shall see."

"But I may promise?"

"Oh, yes! always promise."

"Go, gentlemen," said the president, dismissing the councillors.

And having respectfully saluted the king, he followed his companions.

"He will speak, sire," said Louise de Lorraine, trembling; "he will speak, and your majesty will pardon. See how the foam rises to his lips."

"No, no," said Catharine; "he is seeking something. What does he seek?"

"*Parbleu*," said King Henry, "it is not difficult to guess. He seeks Monsieur the Duke of Parma, Monsieur the Duke of Guise: he seeks Monsieur, my brother, the most Catholic king. Ah! seek! seek! Do you believe that there is more chance of rescue on the Place de Grève than on the route from Flanders? Do you think I have not here a hundred Bellièvres to prevent your escaping the scaffold to which one alone has brought you?"

Salcede had seen the archers leave to fetch the horses: he had seen the president and the councillors speaking to the king; he had seen them disappear; and concluded that the king had given the order for his execution.

Then there appeared on his lips that bloody foam noticed by the young queen; the unhappy man, in the mortal impatience which devoured him, had bitten his lips till they bled.

"No one! no one!" he murmured. "Not one of those who had promised me assistance. Cowards! cowards! cowards!"

Tanchon, the lieutenant, approached the scaffold, and addressed the executioner. "Prepare, Maître," he said.

The executioner made a sign to the other end of the

place, and the horses were now seen making their way through the crowd, leaving an opening which immediately closed behind them.

This opening was made by the spectators, who drew back or hindered the rapid passage of the horses; but the demolished ranks soon filled again, and at times the first became last, and *vice versa*, for the strongest rushed into the empty space.

As they passed the corner of the Rue de la Vannerie, a handsome young man of our acquaintance jumped down from the post upon which he had mounted and was pushed forward by a youth apparently not more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, who seemed very anxious to witness this terrible spectacle.

This was the mysterious page and the Vicomte Ernauton de Carmainges.

"Eh! quick, quick," whispered the page into the ear of his companion, "throw yourself into the opening; there is not a moment to lose."

"But we shall be stifled," replied Ernauton; "you are mad, my little friend."

"I want to see! to see close!" said the page, in so imperious a tone that it was easy to conclude that the words came from lips accustomed to giving orders.

Ernauton obeyed.

"Keep close to the horses! keep close to the horses!" said the page; "do not quit them an inch, or we shall not arrive there."

"But before we arrive you will be trampled to pieces."

"Don't trouble yourself about me. Forward! forward!"

"The horses will kick."

"Seize the tail of the last; a horse will never kick when he is held in that way."

Ernauton yielded, despite himself, to the mysterious influence of the child; he obeyed, clung to the tail of the horse, while the page clung to him.

And through this crowd, undulating like a sea, as thick as a forest, leaving here a flap of a cloak, there a fragment of their doublet, further on the frill of a shirt, they arrived at the same time as the team, to within three steps of the scaffold, upon which Salcede was writhing in the convulsions of despair.

"Are we there?" murmured the young man, panting, when he found Ernauton stop.

"Yes," replied the vicomte, "luckily, for my strength was gone."

"I can't see."

"Pass in front of me."

"No, no, not yet; what are they doing?"

"Making running-knots at the end of the cords."

"And he? what is he about?"

"He, who?"

"The condemned."

"His eyes turn incessantly from side to side."

The horses were near enough to the scaffold to enable the executioner's assistants to attach Salcede's wrists and ankles to the traces fixed to their collars.

Salcede uttered a groan when he felt round his ankles the rude contact of the ropes, which a running-knot tightened round his flesh.

He then cast a supreme, an indefinable glance on the whole of the immense place, the hundred thousand spectators being within his range of vision.

"Monsieur," said the lieutenant Tanchon to him politely, "will it please you to address the people?"

And he approached the ear of the patient to add in a low tone:

"A good confession, to save your life."

Salcede's look searched to the very bottom of his soul. His glance was so eloquent that it seemed to drag the truth from Tanchon's heart to his eyes.

Salcede was not deceived; he understood that the lieutenant was sincere, and would perform what he promised.

"You see," continued Tanchon, "they abandon you ; there is no other hope in this world but the one I offer you."

"Well," said Salcede, with a hoarse sigh, "command silence, I am ready to speak."

"It is a written and signed confession that the king expects."

"In that case untie my hands and give me a pen ; I will write."

"Your confession ?"

"My confession."

Tanchon, transported with joy, had but to make a sign ; the case had been provided for. An archer held everything in readiness ; they passed the ink-stand, pens and paper, which Tanchon placed on the boards of the scaffold.

At the same time they loosened about three feet of the cord fastened to the prisoner's wrist, and raised him upon a seat that he might write.

Salcede, at length seated, began by breathing hard, and making use of his hand to wipe his lips and brush back his hair, which fell, damp with perspiration, over his dark eyebrows.

"Come, come," said Tanchon, "make yourself comfortable and write everything."

"Oh, never fear," said Salcede, holding out his hand for the pen, "be easy ; I shall not forget those who forget me."

And saying this he hazarded a last glance.

No doubt the moment had arrived for the page to show himself, for, seizing the hand of Ernauton—

"Monsieur," he said to him, "for pity's sake, take me in your arms and raise me above the heads of the people who prevent my seeing."

"Ah, you are insatiable, young man."

"This one favor, monsieur."

"You abuse."

"I must see the condemned, do you hear? I must see him."

And as Ernauton did not reply quickly enough to this injunction—

"For pity's sake, monsieur, as a favor, I entreat you."

The child was no longer a whimsical tyrant, but an irresistible suppliant.

Ernauton raised him in his arms, not without some astonishment at the delicacy of the body he held.

The head of the page towered above all the others.

Just as Salcede had taken the pen and looked around as we have said, he observed the head of the young man, and remained stupefied.

At this moment the two fingers of the page were pressed upon his lips; an irrepressible joy beamed over the face of the condemned man, like the expression of the rich man when Lazarus let fall a drop of water on his parched and swelling tongue.

He had recognized the signal so impatiently expected, and which announced that aid was near.

Salcede, after meditating for a few seconds, seized the paper offered him by Tanchon, uneasy at his hesitation and began writing with feverish activity.

"He writes, he writes," murmured the crowd.

"He writes," repeated the queen-mother, with evident delight.

"He writes," said the king; "*par la mordieu!* I will pardon him."

Suddenly Salcede interrupted himself to look again at the young man. The latter repeated the same sign, and Salcede continued to write.

After a shorter interval he stopped, to look once more.

This time, the page signed with his fingers and with his head.

"Have you finished?" said Tanchon, who did not lose sight of the paper.

"Yes," said Salcede, mechanically.

"Sign, then."

Salcede signed without casting a look upon the paper, his eyes being fixed on the young man.

Tanchon extended his hand towards the confession.

"For the king, the king alone," said Salcede.

And he delivered the paper to the lieutenant of the short robe, but with some hesitation, like a conquered soldier yielding his last weapon.

"If you have confessed the whole," said the lieutenant, "you are safe, M. de Salcede."

A smile expressive of irony and anxiety appeared on the lips of the victim, who seemed to question impatiently his mysterious friend.

At length Ernauton, fatigued, wished to deposit his troublesome burden : he opened his arms, the page slipped to the ground. With him disappeared the vision that had sustained the unfortunate man.

When Salcede no longer beheld him, he looked around wildly.

"Well!" he cried, "well!"

No one answered.

"Quick, quick, make haste," he said, "the king has the paper ; he is going to read."

No one moved.

The king hastily unfolded the confession.

"Thousand devils!" cried Salcede, "have they deceived me? I recognized her plainly. It was she—it was she!"

No sooner had the king read the first line than he became indignant.

He turned pale, and exclaimed :

"Oh! the wretch—oh! the wicked man!"

"What is it, my son?" demanded Catharine.

"He retracts, mother; he pretends that he confessed nothing."

"And what next?"

"He declares that the Guises are innocent of any plot, and strangers to this conspiracy."

"Well, and rightly," stammered Catharine, "if it be true."

"He lies!" exclaimed the king: "he lies like a heathen."

"How do you know, my son? MM. de Guise are perhaps calumniated. The judges in their zeal have wrongly interpreted the depositions."

"Eh! madame," exclaimed Henry, not able to master himself longer, "I heard them myself."

"You, my son?"

"Yes, I."

"And how so, if you please?"

"When the prisoner suffered the torture I was behind a curtain; I did not lose a single word, and each word entered my head as a nail driven by a hammer."

"Well! let the rack make him speak, since he must have the rack; order the horses to draw."

Henry, under the impulse of rage, raised his hand.

Tanchon, the lieutenant, repeated the sign.

The cords had already been refastened to the victim; four men jumped upon the four horses; four lashes of the whip resounded, and the four horses started in opposite directions.

A horrible cracking noise and a terrible cry rose from the platform of the scaffold. They saw the miserable Salcede's limbs turn blue, lengthen, and then the blood spouted from them. His face was no longer that of a human being, it was the mask of a demon.

"Oh! treason! treason!" he cried. "Well! I will speak. I wish to speak, and I will tell the whole. Ah! cursed duch——"

The voice rose above the neighing of the steeds and the murmurs of the crowd; but suddenly it ceased.

"Stop, stop!" cried Catharine.

It was too late. The head of Salcede, so lately erect with suffering and rage, suddenly fell to the floor of the scaffold.

"Let him speak," vociferated the queen-mother, "stop, stop, I say!"

Salcede's eyes were unaccountably dilated, fixed, and obstinately directed to the group in which the page had appeared.

But Salcede could no longer speak, he was dead.

Tanchon gave some rapid orders to the archers, who immediately plunged into the crowd in the direction indicated by Salcede's denouncing gaze.

"I am discovered," said the young page, in Ernauton's ear; "for pity's sake assist me, help me, monsieur, they are coming, they are coming."

"But what do you wish now?"

"To fly, do you not see it is I whom they are seeking?"

"But who are you, then?"

"A woman; save me, protect me."

Ernauton turned pale; but generosity triumphed over astonishment and fear.

He placed the page before him, opened a path with blows, and pushed her as far as the corner of the Rue du Mouton, towards an open door.

His young protégée rushed forward and disappeared through the doorway, which seemed to be waiting for her, for it closed behind her.

Ernauton had not time to ask her name, nor where he could see her again.

But on disappearing, the young page, as though she had guessed his thoughts, had made a sign full of promises.

Being now free, Ernauton turned towards the centre of the place, and surveyed at a single glance the scaffold and the royal stand.

Salcede was stretched stark and livid on the scaffold.

Catharine was standing in the window, pale and trembling.

"My son," she said, at length, wiping the perspiration from her brow, "my son, you would do well to change your executioner—he is a Leaguer!"

"And why do you suspect him, mother?" said Henry.

"Look, look."

"Well! I am looking."

"Salcede only suffered one draw, and he is dead."

"Because he was too sensitive to pain."

"Not so, not so," said Catharine, with a smile of contempt, caused by her son's lack of perspicuity; "but because he has been strangled by a fine cord from beneath the scaffold, at the moment he was about to accuse those who left him to die. Have the corpse examined by a skillful doctor, and I am certain you will find round his neck the circle which the cord has left there."

"You are right," said Henry, whose eyes flashed for a moment, "my cousin of Guise is better served than I am."

"Hush, my son," said Catharine, "no scene; we shall only be laughed at, for once more we have missed our aim."

"Joyeuse did well to go and amuse himself elsewhere," said the king; "we can count on nothing in this world, not even on executions. Come, ladies, let us go."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BROTHERS JOYEUSE.

MM. DE JOYEUSE, as we have seen, had escaped in the meanwhile behind the Hôtel de Ville, and leaving with the king's suite the lackeys, who held their horses, side by side they walked through the now deserted streets of this populous quarter, so general was the rush of spectators to the Place de Grève.

Once outside, they walked arm in arm, but without speaking.

Henri, lately so joyous, was preoccupied, and almost gloomy.

Anne seemed uneasy, and embarrassed by his brother's silence.

It was Anne, however, who spoke first.

"Well, Henri," he said, "whither are you leading me?"

"I am not leading you at all, brother, I am only walking forward," replied Henri, as if he had suddenly awakened.

"Do you wish to go anywhere?"

"And you?"

Henri smiled wistfully.

"Oh, as for me, I care little where I go."

"Yet you go somewhere, every night," said Anne, "for every evening you leave at the same hour, and do not return until nearly midnight, and sometimes not at all."

"Are you questioning me, brother?" demanded Henri, with a charming sweetness, combined with a certain respect for his elder brother.

"I question you?" said Anne; "God forbid; secrets belong to those who have them."

"If you wish it, I shall have no secrets from you," replied Henri. "You know it well."

"You will have no secrets from me, Henri?"

"Never, brother. Are you not my liege lord as well as my friend?"

"Oh! I thought you had some from me, who am but a poor layman; I thought you had our learned brother, that future cardinal, that pillar of theology, that flame of religion, that orthodox architect in cases of court conscience, in whom you confided, and that in him you found at once confession, absolution, and—who knows?—advice; for, in our family," added Anne, laughing, "we are all and everything—you know it—witness our very dear father."

Henri du Bouchage seized his brother's hand and pressed it affectionately.

"To me you are more than a director, more than a confessor, more than a father, my dear Anne," he said; "I repeat that you are my friend."

"Then, my friend, when you used to be so gay why have I seen you become sad? and why, instead of going out by day, do you only go out by night?"

"Brother, I am not gloomy," replied Henri, smiling.

"What are you then?"

"I am in love."

"Good. And this preoccupation?"

"Arises from my continually thinking of my love."

"And you sigh in telling me this?"

"Yes."

"You sigh? You, Henri, Count du Bouchage, the brother of Joyeuse; you whom evil tongues call the third king of France,—you know that M. de Guise is the second, if not the first; you who are rich; you who are handsome; you who will be a peer, duke of France at the first opportunity,—you are in love, you are pensive, and you sigh; you sigh, you whose device is *hilariter* (gayly)!"

"My dear Anne, all these gifts of the past or all these promises for the future, have never been included by me among the things which were to form my happiness. I have no ambition."

"Which means that you no longer have any."

"At all events not for the things you speak of."

"At this moment, perhaps; but, by-and-by, you will return to them."

"Never, my brother! I desire nothing, I want nothing."

"Then you are wrong, brother. When one is called Joyeuse—one of the best names in France, when one has a brother a king's favorite, one desires everything, and one has everything."

Henri sadly hung his blond head.

"Come," said Anne, "here we are quite alone, quite lost. The devil take me, we have crossed the water, and here we are on the Pont de la Tournelle, without having

noticed it. I do not think that on this lonely strand, with this cold breeze, near this green water, any one will come to listen to us. Have you anything serious to say to me, Henri ? ”

“ Nothing, nothing, only that I am in love, and that you know already, since I have just told you so.”

“ But, the devil ! that is not serious,” said Anne, stamping with his foot ; “ by the pope, I am also in love ! ”

“ Not as I am, brother.”

“ I also think sometimes of my mistress.”

“ Yes, but not always.”

“ I also have disappointments, and even vexations.”

“ Yes, but you also have joys, for you are loved.”

“ Oh, I have great obstacles too ; great mysteries are exacted of me.”

“ They demand, you said, they demand, brother ? If your mistress exacts she is yours.”

“ No doubt, she is mine ; that is, mine and M. de Mayenne’s ; confidence for confidence, Henri, I have the mistress of that lascivious De Mayenne, a girl who is madly in love with me, who would quit Mayenne on the very instant were she not afraid he would kill her. It is his habit to murder women, you know. Besides, I detest these Guises, and it amuses me to enjoy myself at the expense of one of them. Well, I tell you, I repeat it to you, I have sometimes contradictions, quarrels, but I don’t become as gloomy as a monk on that account ; I don’t weep. I continue to laugh, if not always, at least sometimes. Come, tell me whom you love, Henri : is your mistress beautiful at any rate ? ”

“ Alas, brother, she is not my mistress.”

“ Is she beautiful ? ”

“ Too beautiful.”

“ Her name ? ”

“ I do not know it.”

“ Come, now.”

“ On my honor ! ”

“ My friend, I begin to think it is more dangerous than

I supposed. It is not sadness, by the pope! it is madness."

"She has spoken to me but once, or rather she has spoken but once in my presence, and since then I have not even heard the sound of her voice."

"And you have not taken the trouble to inquire?"

"Of whom?"

"How, of whom? Of the neighbors."

"She lives alone in a house, and no one knows her."

"Ah, is she a ghost?"

"She is a woman, tall and beautiful as a nymph, serious and grave as the angel Gabriel."

"How did you know her; where did you meet her?"

"One day, at the crossway of the Gypecienne, I was following a young girl. I entered the little garden which adjoins the church; there is a bench there under the trees. Do you know this garden, Anne?"

"No, but never mind, continue; there is a bench there, under the trees, well?"

"The shades of evening were thickening, I had lost sight of the young girl, and, in seeking her, I arrived at this bench."

"Go on, go on, I am listening."

"I had just seen a woman's dress in that direction, and I held out my hands."

"'Pardon me, monsieur,' suddenly said the voice of a man whom I had not noticed.

"And the hand of this man gently but firmly pushed me away."

"He dared to touch you, Joyeuse?"

"Listen! the man had his face concealed by a sort of cowl, I took him for a monk; besides, he impressed me by the affectionate and polite tone of his warning, for as he spoke he showed me with his finger, at a distance of ten paces, the woman whose white garment had attracted me there, and who knelt before this stone bench as if it had been an altar.

"I stood still, brother; it was about the beginning of September that this adventure happened to me; the atmosphere was balmy, the violets and roses, planted by friends over the tombs of the buried, sent me their delicate perfume; the moon, rising above the white clouds, began to shed her light over the steeple of the church, the windows of which were silvered at the top, while at the bottom they reflected the golden rays of the lighted tapers within. My brother, whether it was the majesty of the place or her own dignity, I know not, but the kneeling woman seemed to me in the darkness as resplendent as a statue of marble. She impressed me with I know not what respect, which made my heart turn cold.

"I looked at her earnestly.

"She bent over the bench, encircled it with her two arms, placed her lips to it, and I soon saw her shoulders heave with such sobs as you never heard; never did the pointed steel so grievously pierce the heart!

"As she wept, she kissed the bench with ardor; her tears had moved me, her kisses maddened me."

"But it was she, by the pope! who was mad," said Joyeuse; "to kiss a stone in this manner, and sob for nothing."

"Oh! it was a heavy grief that made her sob; it was a profound love that made her kiss the bench. But whom did she love? for whom did she weep? for whom did she pray? I know not."

"But this man, did you not question him?"

"I did."

"And what did he reply?"

"That she had lost her husband."

"Bah! as if people wept like that for a husband," said Joyeuse; "a handsome reply, *pardieu!* and you were satisfied with it?"

"I was obliged to be content as he would give me no other."

"But what is the man himself?"

"A sort of domestic, who lives with her."

"His name?"

"He refused to tell me."

"Young?—old?"

"He might be about twenty-eight or thirty years of age."

"Well, what followed?—she did not remain the whole night praying and weeping, I suppose?"

"No; when she had finished weeping—that is, when she had exhausted her tears, when she had worn out her lips on the bench—she rose. There was about this woman so much mystery and sadness that instead of advancing towards her, as I would have done to any other, I drew back; it was she who then came to me, or rather towards me, for she did not even see me; a ray of moonlight now fell upon her countenance, and her face appeared to me illuminated, splendid; it had resumed its sad severity; no more contractions, no more trembling, no more tears; only their traces were still on her cheeks. Her eyes alone still sparkled. Her mouth opened gently, to inhale the life which, but a moment previously, had seemed ready to abandon her; she took a few steps slowly like one who walked in her sleep; the man ran to her and supported her, for she seemed to have forgotten that she trod on earth. Oh! my brother, what startling, what superhuman beauty; I have seen nothing on earth that resembled her; sometimes only in my dreams, when heaven opened, there descended visions similar to this reality."

"Go on, go on, Henri," said Anne, interested in spite of himself in this recital at which he had determined to laugh.

"Oh, it is soon finished, brother; her servant whispered something to her in a low tone, and she lowered her veil. No doubt he told her I was there, but she did not even look towards me; and I saw her no more, brother: it

seemed to me, when the veil concealed her face, as if the sky had become suddenly overshadowed, and that it was no longer a living creature, but a spectre escaped from the tomb, which glided silently before me in the long grass.

"She went out of the garden, I followed her.

"From time to time, the man turned round and might have seen me, for I did not conceal myself, amazed as I was. What would you have? I had still vulgar ideas in my mind—the old leaven in my heart."

"What do you mean, Henri?" said Anne, "I do not understand."

The young man smiled.

"I mean, brother," he said, "that my youth has been gay, that I have often thought I loved, and that all women were to me, up to this moment, women to whom I could offer my love."

"Oh! oh! what is this one, then?" exclaimed Joyeuse, attempting to resume his gayety, somewhat disturbed despite himself, by his brother's narration. "Take care, Henri, you are raving; this one is not a woman of flesh and bone, eh?"

"Brother," said the young man, grasping the hand of Joyeuse in a feverish manner, "brother," he said, so low that his breath scarcely reached his companion, "as truly as I live I know not if she be a creature of this world or not."

"By the pope!" he replied, "you will frighten me, if a Joyeuse can know fear."

Then attempting to resume his gayety, he said: "However, as she walks, weeps, and kisses, it seems to augur well, but go on; what happened?"

"Very little; I followed her, she did not attempt to conceal herself from me, to try to escape, or lead me astray; she did not even appear to think of it."

"Well! where does she reside?"

"Near the Bastille, in the Rue de Lesdiguières; at the door her companion turned round and saw me."

"You then made him some sign to intimate that you wished to speak to him?"

"I dared not: you will think me ridiculous, but the servant impressed me almost as much as the mistress."

"Never mind, you entered the house?"

"No, brother."

"Upon my word, Henri, I have a great mind to disown you for a Joyeuse; but at all events you returned the next morning?"

"Yes, but in vain—in vain to the Gypécienne, in vain to the Rue de Lesdiguières."

"She had disappeared?"

"Like a shadow that had vanished."

"But at least you made inquiries?"

"The street has but few inhabitants, no one could satisfy me; I watched for the man, to question him; he was no more visible than the woman; however, a light which I saw burning in the evening, through the blinds, gave me the consoling indication that she was still there. I employed a hundred devices to enter the house; letters, messages, flowers, presents, everything failed. One evening the light failed to appear and I saw it no more; the lady, wearied no doubt by my pursuit, had quitted the Rue de Lesdiguières; no one knew her present abode."

"But you have found her again, this savage beauty?"

"Chance aided me. I am unjust, my brother; it was Providence who was unwilling that we should drag such a life. Listen, it is really strange. I was going along the Rue de Bussy a fortnight ago, at midnight; you know how strict the regulations are about fire; well! I saw not only light at the windows of a house, but a real fire which had broken out in the second story.

"I knocked loudly at the door, a man appeared at the window.

"‘Your house is on fire!’ I cried to him.

"‘Silence, for pity’s sake,’ he said to me, ‘silence, I am endeavoring to extinguish it.’

“‘Do you wish me to call the watch?’

“‘No, no! in heaven’s name, call no one.’

“‘But can I help you?’

“‘Will you? if so, come, and you will render me a service, for which I will be grateful the rest of my life.’

“‘And how would you have me get in?’

“‘Here is the key of the door.’

“And he threw me a key from the window.

“I rapidly mounted the stairs, and entered the room in which the fire was raging.

“It was the floor that had taken fire; I was in the laboratory of a chemist. In making some experiment, an inflammable liquid had been spilled and had ignited the floor.

“When I entered the fire was under control, so that I had leisure to examine the man.

“He was about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, at least he appeared so to me; a frightful scar furrowed his cheek, another traversed his skull, his bushy beard concealed the remainder of his face.

“‘Thank you, monsieur, but you see the fire is now extinguished; if you are as gallant a man as you appear, have the kindness to retire, for my mistress may enter at any moment, and she will be angry at seeing, at this hour, a stranger in my house, or rather in her house.’

“The sound of this voice rendered me nearly motionless. I opened my mouth to say to him, ‘You are the man of the Gypécienne, the man of the Rue de Lesdiguières, the man of the unknown lady—for you remember that he was covered with a cowl, that I had never seen his face, that I had only heard his voice. I was about to tell him this, to question him, to implore him, when the door suddenly opened, and a woman entered.

“‘What’s the matter, Remy?’ she demanded, majestically standing on the threshold, ‘why this noise?’

“Oh! brother, it was she, more beautiful by the dying flames of the fire than by the pale light of the moon; it

was she, it was the woman whose constant image was eating away my heart.

"At the exclamation I uttered, the servant examined me more attentively.

" 'Thank you, monsieur,' he said again, 'thank you ; but you see the fire is out. Go, I beg of you.'

" 'My friend,' I said, 'you dismiss me rather abruptly.'

" 'Madame,' said the man, 'it is he.'

" 'Who?' she inquired.

" 'The young cavalier we met in the Gypécienne garden, and who followed us to the Rue de Lesdiguières.'

"She then fixed her eyes on me, and by her look I felt assured that she saw me for the first time.

" 'Monsieur,' she said, 'for mercy's sake, retire!'

"I hesitated, I wished to speak, to supplicate, but my lips could not pronounce the words ; I remained motionless and dumb, gazing at her.

" 'Take care, monsieur,' said the servant with more bitterness than severity, 'take care, you will force madame to fly a second time.'

" 'Heaven forbid,' I replied, bowing ; 'but, madame, I do not mean to offend you.'

"She did not reply to me. Insensible, mute, and frozen as though she had not heard me, she turned round, and I saw her disappear gradually in the shade, descending the steps of a staircase, on which her footsteps made no more sound than those of a spirit."

"And that is all?" inquired Joyeuse.

"All. The servant led me to the door, saying to me : 'Forget, monsieur, in the name of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, I entreat you, forget.'

"I fled, dismayed, stupefied, pressing my head between my hands, and asking myself if I were not mad.

"Since then, I go every evening to this street ; you see, therefore, why, on leaving the Hôtel de Ville, I directed my steps this way ; every evening, I said, I come to this street, and concealed behind the angle of the opposite

house, under a small balcony which completely hides me, I see once in ten times, perhaps, a light in the room she inhabits. There is my life, there is my happiness."

"What happiness!" exclaimed Joyeuse.

"Alas! I should lose this if I tried for more."

"But if you lose yourself with this resignation?"

"My brother," said Henri, with a melancholy smile, "what would you have! I am happy thus."

"Impossible."

"What do you mean? Happiness is relative: I know that she is there, that she lives there, that she breathes there; I see her through the wall, or, rather, I seem to see her. If she quitted this house, if I should spend another fortnight like that which I spent when I had lost her, I should go mad, or become a monk."

"Not so, *mordieu!* there are already enough madmen and monks in the family. Let us stay as we are, my dear friend."

"No observations, Anne, no raillery; observations are useless, raillery will do nothing."

"And who speaks to you of observations or of raillery?"

"Very well. But——"

"Allow me to tell you one thing only."

"What?"

"That you have been taken in like a schoolboy."

"I made neither calculations nor combinations. I was not taken in. I abandoned myself to something stronger than my will. When a current drives you, it is better to follow the current than to struggle against it."

"But if it lead to an abyss?"

"We must be ingulfed in it."

"That is your opinion?"

"Yes."

"It is not mine, and in your place——"

"What would you have done, Anne?"

"Enough, most certainly, to have learned her name, her age; in your place——"

"Anne, Anne, you do not know her."

"No, but I know you. Now, Henri, you had fifty thousand crowns that I gave you out of the last hundred thousand the king gave me on his birthday."

"They are still in my chest, Anne; not one is missing."

"*Mordieu!* so much the worse. If they were not in your chest, the woman would be in your alcove."

"Oh! brother."

"There is no 'Oh!' in the matter! Henri, an ordinary servant may be bought for ten crowns, a good one for a hundred, an excellent one for a thousand, a marvel for three thousand. Now, let us see. Suppose this man to be the phoenix of servants, let us imagine the ideal of fidelity, yet by means of twenty thousand crowns, by the pope! he would be your own; there would then remain one hundred and thirty thousand francs, wherewith to purchase the phoenix of women, delivered over by the phoenix of servants. Henri, my friend, you are a simpleton."

"Anne," said Henri, sighing, "there are individuals who are not to be bought; there are hearts which the riches of a kingdom cannot purchase."

Joyeuse pondered.

"Well! I admit it," he said; "but hearts are sometimes given."

"You think so?"

"Well! what have you done to win the heart of that unfeeling beauty?"

"I believe, Anne, that I have done all I could."

"Now, really, Comte du Bouchage, you are mad; you see a woman, sad, solitary, and sighing, and you make yourself more sad, more solitary, more sighing, that is, more wearisome than herself! In truth, you speak in a strange fashion about love. She is lonely, give her a companion; she is melancholy, be gay; she grieves, console her, and replace her loss."

"Impossible."

"Have you tried?"

"What is the use?"

"Why, if only to make the experiment. You are in love, you say?"

"I have no words by which I can express my love."

"Well! in a fortnight you shall possess your mistress."

"Brother!"

"On the faith of a Joyeuse. You have not despaired, I hope?"

"No, for I have never hoped."

"At what hour do you see her?"

"At what hour do I see her?"

"Yes."

"But I have told you, that I do not see her."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Not even at her window?"

"Not even her shadow, I tell you."

"We must put an end to that. Come, has she a lover?"

"I have never seen a man enter her house, except Remy whom I mentioned to you."

"How is the house?"

"Two floors, a small door on a step, a terrace above the second window."

"But could we not enter by this terrace?"

"It is isolated from the other houses."

"And what is there opposite to it?"

"Another house of the same kind, although apparently more elevated."

"By whom is this house inhabited?"

"By a sort of bourgeois."

"Of a good or bad disposition?"

"Of a good disposition, for at times I have heard him laugh by himself."

"Buy his house from him."

"How do you know it is for sale?"

"Offer him double what it is worth."

"And if the lady sees me?"

“ Well ? ”

“ She will disappear again, whereas by concealing my presence, I hope some day or other to see her again.”

“ You shall see her to-night.”

“ I ? ”

“ Be under her balcony at eight o'clock.”

“ I shall be there, as I am every day, but without more hope than usual.”

“ Apropos ! the proper address ? ”

“ Between the Port Bussy, and the Hôtel Saint Denis, near the corner of the Rue des Augustins, and a few steps from a large inn with the sign—*The Sword of the Brave Chevalier*.”

“ Very well, at eight o'clock this evening ”

“ But what will you do ? ”

“ You will see, you will hear. In the meantime, return home, put on your finest dress, take your richest jewels, moisten your hair with the finest essences ; to-night you shall enter the house.”

“ May Providence hear you, brother.”

“ Henri, when Providence is deaf, the devil is not so. I leave you, my mistress awaits me ; no, I mean the mistress of M. de Mayenne. By the pope ! she, at least, is no prude.”

“ Brother ! ”

“ Pardon me, good servant of love ; I make no comparison between these two ladies, you may be sure, although, from what you tell me, I prefer mine, or rather ours ! But she expects me, and I would not keep her waiting. Adieu, Henri ; till to-night ! ”

“ To-night, Anne.”

The two brothers pressed each other's hands and parted.

The one, after taking two hundred paces, boldly lifted and let fall the knocker of a handsome Gothic house in the Square of Notre Dame.

The other dived silently into one of the tortuous streets which adjoin the Palais.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH THE SWORD OF THE BRAVE CHEVALIER PREVAILED
OVER THE ROSE-TREE OF LOVE.

DURING the conversation we have reported, night had fallen, enveloping in its damp mantle of fog the town, which two hours previously had been so animated.

Salcede dead, all the spectators had thought of going to their homes, and there was nothing to be seen in the streets but some scattered groups, instead of that uninterrupted chain of sight-seers, which, during the day, had assembled together at the same point.

Even in the most distant quarters might be noticed the remains of the earthquake, easily understood after the long agitation of the centre.

Near the Porte Bussy, whither we must transport our readers, to follow some of their acquaintances and to make new ones, might be heard a buzzing, like the sound of a beehive at sunset, coming from a certain house painted rose color, and ornamented with blue and white pointings, which was known by the sign of "The Sword of the Brave Chevalier," but which in fact was nothing more than an inn of gigantic proportions, recently built in this neighborhood.

At this period Paris did not possess a single good hostelry, which had not its triumphant sign. The Sword of the Brave Chevalier was one of these magnificent exhibitions, destined to please all tastes, and include all sympathies.

On the entablature was painted a representation of a combat between an archangel, or a saint, and a dragon

breathing, like the monster of Hippolytus, torrents of flame and smoke. The painter, animated by a sentiment at once heroic and pious, had placed in the hands of the proud knight, armed *cap-à-pie*, not a sword, but an immense cross, with which he cut in two, more skilfully than with the sharpest blade, the unfortunate dragon, whose fragments lay bleeding on the ground.

At the bottom of the sign, or rather of the picture, for most certainly it deserved this appellation, might be seen a number of spectators raising their hands to heaven, while from above, angels covered with laurels and palms the helmet of the Brave Chevalier.

Then as if to prove that he could paint in every style, the artist had grouped around, grapes, pumpkins, beetles, lizards, a snail on a rose; lastly, two rabbits, one white, the other gray, which despite the difference in color, which might have indicated a difference of opinion, were both scratching their noses, rejoicing, probably, at the memorable victory gained by the proud chevalier over the symbolic dragon, which was no other than Satan.

Assuredly, the proprietor of the sign must have been hard to please if he was not satisfied with the conscience of the artist. In fact, the painter had not lost a line in space, and if it had been necessary to add a worm to the picture, there would have been no room for it.

Now let us admit one thing, and this avowal, although painful, is necessary to prove our veracity as a historian. In spite of its attractive exterior, the inn did not prosper; on the contrary, for reasons we shall presently explain, and which our readers will understand, there were, we do not say even sometimes, but nearly always, empty benches at the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier.

And yet, as they would say to-day, the house was large and comfortable; built squarely, fixed to the ground by a solid foundation, it stretched out superbly; above its sign four small towers, each containing its octagon chamber; the whole built, it is true, with the rough ends of trees,

but coquettish and mysterious, as every house that is anxious to please men, and especially women, ought to be. But there lay the evil—we cannot please every one.

Such, however, was not the conviction of Dame Fournichon, hostess of the Brave Chevalier. In consequence of this non-conviction, she engaged her husband to quit a bathing-house in which they vegetated, Rue Saint Honoré, to turn the spit and broach the wine for the profit of the lovers of the carrefour Bussy, and even of other quarters of Paris. Unfortunately for the expectations of Dame Fournichon, her hostelry was situated not far distant from the Pré-aux-clercs, so that, attracted both by its proximity and sign, the Brave Chevalier received so many couples prepared to fight, that others, less warlike, fled from the poor hostelry as from a plague, for fear of noise and tumult. Lovers are a peaceable set, who do not like to be disturbed, so that in these little towers were lodged none but weather-beaten soldiers; indeed the little Cupids decorating the interior had been ornamented with mustaches and other appendages, more or less decent, by the charcoal of the *habitués*.

Thus Dame Fournichon affirmed, and not without reason, we must admit, that the sign had brought ill-luck to the house, and that had her wishes been attended to and the painting over the door represented, instead of the Brave Chevalier and the hideous dragon, which frightened away every one, something gallant, such as the *Rose-tree of Love*, with hearts aflame instead of roses, every tender mind would have chosen her hostelry as a domicile.

Unfortunately, Maître Fournichon, unwilling to acknowledge that he repented his idea, and the influence this idea had had over the sign, paid no attention to the observations of his housekeeper, and replied, shrugging his shoulders, that, as an old standard-bearer of M. Danville, he ought naturally to look for customers amongst the veterans of war; he added that a trooper who had

nothing to think of but to drink, swallows as much as three pair of lovers, and should he pay but half the reckoning, there would still be a profit, since the most prodigal of lovers never pays as much as three troopers.

Besides, he would add, wine is more moral than love.

At these words Dame Fournichon would shrug her plump shoulders in a way to make us malignantly interpret her ideas in matters of morality.

The Fournichon affairs were in this divided state, and the couple vegetated at the carrefour Bussy, as they had vegetated at the Rue Saint Honoré, when an unforeseen incident changed the face of things, and brought triumph to the opinions of Maître Fournichon, to the greater glory of the worthy sign, on which every kingdom in nature had its representative.

About a month before the execution of Salcede, at the conclusion of some military exercises which had taken place in the Pré-aux-clercs, Dame Fournichon and her husband were installed, according to their habit, each in an angular tower of their establishment, idle, pondering and sad, because all the tables and all the rooms of the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier were empty.

On this day the Rose-tree of Love had not bloomed.

On this day the sword of the Brave Chevalier had not been drawn.

The couple, therefore, were looking wistfully over the plain, from which were disappearing (as they embarked in the ferry-boat of the tour de Nesle, to return to the Louvre) the soldiers who had just been manœuvring under the command of a captain. Whilst looking and groaning against the military despotism which forced the body-guard of soldiers to return, although naturally so thirsty, they saw the captain put his horse to a trot, and advance with a single orderly, in the direction of the Porte Bussy.

The plumed officer, proudly seated on his white horse, and whose gilt sword-sheath raised a handsome cloak

of Flemish cloth, was in ten minutes opposite the hostelry.

But as it was not to the hostelry that he journeyed, he was passing by, without even having noticed the sign, for he appeared gloomy and pre-occupied, when Maître Fournichon, whose heart sickened at the idea of not having a customer the whole day, leaned outside the tower, saying :

“ Look, wife, what a handsome horse ! ”

To which Madame Fournichon replied in an equally audible voice, “ And what a handsome cavalier ! ”

The captain, who did not seem insensible to flattery, wherever it might come from, raised his head, as though suddenly awakened. He saw the host, hostess, and hostelry, pulled up his horse, and called his orderly, and, still in the saddle, attentively examined the house and the quarter.

Fournichon had tumbled downstairs, four steps at a time, and stood at the door, his cap rolled up in his two hands.

The captain having reflected some moments, dismounted from his horse.

“ Is there no one here ? ” he demanded.

“ No one at the present moment, monsieur, ” replied the host, humbly.

And he added :

“ But it is not usually so. ”

But Dame Fournichon, like most women, was more sagacious than her husband, and, in consequence, she cried hastily from the top of her window :

“ If monsieur seeks solitude, he will be perfectly at home here. ”

The cavalier raised his head, and seeing the honest face, after hearing the frank reply, he answered :

“ Yes, my good woman, that is what I desire at present. ”

Dame Fournichon immediately descended to meet the traveller, saying :

"This time it is the Rosier d'Amour that draws, and not the Sword of the Brave Chevalier."

The captain, who at this hour attracted the attention of the worthy couple, and who also deserves the attention of the reader, was a man from thirty to thirty-five years of age, who seemed, however, not more than eight and twenty, so careful had he been of his person. He was tall, well-made, with an expressive and fine physiognomy. On examination, perhaps some little affectation might be noticed in his noble manners, but affected or not, his manners were noble.

He threw his companion the bridle of a magnificent horse, which pawed the ground, and said to him :

"Wait for me here, and walk the horses about."

The soldier received the bridle and obeyed.

When inside the vast hostelry, he stopped, and casting a look of satisfaction around him :

"Oh! oh! such a good hall, and not a single guest! very good!"

Maitre Fournichon looked at him with astonishment, while madame smiled significantly.

"But," continued the captain, "there must be something in your conduct or your house, which keeps the customers away from you?"

"Neither the one nor the other, monsieur, thank God," replied Madame Fournichon, "but the neighborhood is new, and as to the customers, we take our choice."

"Ah! very well," said the captain.

Maitre Fournichon, during this time, condescended to nod his head, in approval of his wife's answers.

"For example," she added, with a certain wink of the eyes which revealed the author of the Rose-tree of Love, "in the case of a customer like your lordship, we would willingly forego a dozen."

"That is polite, my pretty hostess. Thank you."

"Will monsieur taste some wine?" said Fournichon in his least objectionable voice.

"Will monsieur visit the rooms?" said Madame Fournichon in her softest tone.

"Both, if you please," replied the captain.

Fournichon descended to the cellar, whilst his wife showed her guest the stairs leading to the towers, upon which, tucking up her coquettish petticoat, she already preceded him, making her truly Parisian slipper creak at every step.

"How many persons can you lodge here?" inquired the captain, on reaching the first floor.

"Thirty persons, of whom ten may be masters."

"That is not enough, *ma belle*," replied the captain.

"Why so, monsieur?"

"I had a project; let us say no more about it."

"Ah, monsieur, you will certainly not find anything better than the hostelry of the Rosier d'Amour."

"How the Rosier d'Amour?"

"Of the Brave Chevalier, I mean, and unless having the Louvre and its dependencies——"

The stranger fixed a singular glance upon her.

"You are right," said he, "and unless the Louvre——" And then aside: "Why not?" he continued, "it will be more convenient, and not so expensive. You say, then, my good dame," he said, aloud, "that you can receive in your house here thirty persons?"

"Yes, without doubt."

"But for a day?"

"Oh! for a day, forty, and even forty-five."

"Forty-five? *parfandious!* that is just my number."

"Really? then see how lucky it is!"

"And that without making a commotion outside?"

"Sometimes, on a Sunday, we have eighty soldiers here."

"And no crowd before the house, no spying by your neighbors?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* no; as for neighbors we have only a worthy bourgeois, who meddles with the affairs of no one;

and a lady who lives so retired that, although she has lived here for three weeks, I have not yet seen her; all the rest are small fry."

"This suits me to a marvel."

"Oh, so much the better," said Madame Fournichon.

"And a month from to-day, madame," continued the captain, "remember this, a month from to-day."

"The 26th of October, then?"

"Precisely, the 26th of October."

"Well?"

"Well! on the 26th of October I will hire your inn."

"The whole of it?"

"Yes, the whole; I wish to give a surprise to a few compatriots, officers, or, at least for the most part, soldiers, who come to Paris to seek their fortune; in the meantime they will have received notice to come here."

"And how will they have received this notice, if it is a surprise you intend for them?" imprudently observed Madame Fournichon.

"Ah!" replied the captain, visibly annoyed by the question; "ah! if you are curious or indiscreet—*parfandious!*"

"No, no, monsieur," quickly replied Madame Fournichon, frightened.

Fournichon had heard; at the words "officers or soldiers," his heart swelled. He ran.

"Monsieur," he exclaimed, "you shall be the master here, the despot of the house, and there will be no questions. *Mon Dieu!* all your friends shall be welcome."

"I did not say my friends, but my countrymen, my good man," said the captain, haughtily.

"Yes, yes, the countrymen of his lordship; it is I who am wrong."

Dame Fournichon turned her back in dudgeon. The roses of love had been changed into piles of halberds.

"You will give them supper," continued the captain.

"Very well."

"You can let them sleep, if necessary, in case I have not prepared lodgings for them."

"Certainly."

"In a word, you will place yourself at their entire disposal without any questions."

"That is understood."

"Here are thirty livres, as earnest money."

"It is a bargain, my lord; your countrymen shall be treated like kings, and if you would like to assure yourself by tasting the wine——"

"I never drink, thank you."

The captain approached the window, and called the man who held the horses.

Maitre Fournichon in the meantime had reflected.

"My lord," said he (since the receipt of the three pistoles so generously paid in advance, Maitre Fournichon called the stranger my lord.) "My lord, how shall I recognize these gentlemen?"

"It is true, *parfondious*! I forgot; give me some wax, paper, and a light."

Dame Fournichon brought it all.

The captain impressed upon the melted wax the bezel of a ring which he wore on his left hand.

"There," said he, "you see that figure?"

"A handsome woman."

"Yes, it is a Cleopatra; well, each of my countrymen will bring you a similar one; you will therefore lodge the bearer of this seal, you understand."

"For how long?"

"I do not yet know; you shall receive my orders on this subject."

"We will await them."

The handsome cavalier descended the staircase, mounted his horse, and departed at a smart trot.

While awaiting his return, the host and his wife pocketed their thirty livres, to the great joy of the former, who did not cease repeating:

"Soldiers! come, decidedly the sign is not wrong, and it is by the sword that we shall make our fortune."

And he began polishing his saucepans for the expected 26th of October.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MEETING OF GASCONS.

To say that Dame Fournichon was as absolutely discreet as the stranger had recommended her to be, is more than we are bold enough to say. Besides, she thought herself, no doubt, released from any obligation towards him by the advantage he had given Maître Fournichon and the Sword of the Brave Chevalier; but as there still remained to her more to guess than she had been told, she began, in order to establish her suppositions on a solid basis, by endeavoring to discover who was the unknown cavalier, who paid so generously for the hospitality of his countrymen. She did not fail to question the first soldier who passed as to the name of the captain who had reviewed the soldiers.

The soldier, who was probably more cautious than she, first inquired of her, before replying, for what purpose she asked the question.

"Because he has been here," replied Madame Fournichon; "and one likes to know to whom one has been talking."

The soldier began to laugh.

"The captain who commanded the review, would not have entered this inn, Madame Fournichon," he said.

"And why so?" demanded the hostess; "is he too great a lord for that?"

"Perhaps."

"Well! if I told you it was not for himself that he entered the hostelry of the Brave Chevalier?"

"And for whom, then?"

"For his friends."

"The captain who commanded the review would not lodge his friends at the Brave Chevalier, I'll answer for it."

"*Peste!* how you run on, my good man! And who then can he be who is too grand to lodge his friends in the best hotel in Paris?"

"You mean to speak of the captain who commanded the review, do you not?"

"Without doubt."

"Well! my good woman, he who commanded the review is purely and simply M. le Duke Nogaret de Lavalette d'Epéron, peer of France, colonel-general of the infantry of the king, and rather more a king than his Majesty himself. Well! what do you say to that?"

"That if it was he who came, he has done me a great honor."

"Did you hear him say, '*parfandious*'?"

"Eh! eh!" said Dame Fournichon, who had seen many extraordinary things in her lifetime, and to whom the word *parfandious* was not altogether unknown.

We may now judge whether the 26th of October was impatiently expected.

On the 25th, in the evening, a man entered bearing a rather heavy bag which he placed on the Fournichons' buffet.

"It is the price of the repast ordered for to-morrow," he said.

"At how much a head?" demanded the host and hostess together.

"Six livres."

"Will the captain's countrymen have only one meal here?"

"Only one."

"The captain has found them a lodging, then?"

"It seems so."

And the messenger left in spite of the questions of the Rose-tree and the Sword, without deigning to reply to any of them.

At length the much desired day rose upon the kitchens of the Brave Chevalier.

Half-past twelve struck at the Augustins, when two cavaliers drew up at the door of the hostelry, dismounted from their horses, and entered.

These came from the Porte Bussy, and naturally found themselves the first to arrive,—first, because they had horses, and next, because the hostelry of the Sword was scarcely a hundred paces from the Porte Bussy.

One of them, indeed, who appeared the chief, as much by his handsome appearance, as by his magnificence, had brought with him two well-mounted servants.

Each of them exhibited his seal with the image of Cleopatra, and was received by the host with all sorts of courtesies,—especially the young man with the servants.

With the exception, however, of the latter, the newcomers all seemed timid and preoccupied; it was apparent that something important was on their minds, especially when they mechanically carried their hands to their pockets.

Some asked to rest themselves, others went to see the town until supper-time; the young man with the two servants inquired if there was nothing new to see in Paris.

“Well,” said Dame Fournichon, admiring the good looks of the cavalier, “if you do not mind the crowd, and have no objection to remain on your legs for four hours at a stretch, you can amuse yourself by going to see M. de Salcede, a Spaniard, who has conspired.”

“Ah!” said the young man, “very true, I have heard of his affair. I will go there.”

And he left with the two servants.

About two o’clock, fifteen fresh travellers, arrived in groups of four or five.

Some of them came alone. There was even one who

entered in a neighborly way without a hat, and a switch in his hand; he swore against Paris, where the thieves were so audacious that his hat had been taken from him near the Grève, while getting through a group, and so expertly that he had never been enabled to detect the thief. For the rest it was his own fault, he ought not to have entered Paris with a hat ornamented with so magnificent a clasp.

Towards four o'clock, there were already forty of the captain's compatriots installed in the hostelry of the Fournichons.

"Is it not strange?" said the host to his wife, "they are all Gascons!"

"What do you see strange in that?" replied the dame; "did not the captain say they were all his countrymen?"

"Well?"

"Since he is a Gascon himself, his countrymen ought to be Gascons."

"Ah, it is true," said the host.

"Is not M. d'Epernon from Toulouse?"

"True, true! You still hold that it is M. d'Epernon, then?"

"Did he not let slip three times the famous 'parfandious'?"

"He let slip the famous 'parfandious'?" said Fournichon, anxiously, "what sort of an animal is that?"

"Imbecile! it is his favorite oath."

"Ah! true."

"There is only one thing to be surprised about, and that is, that you have but forty Gascons, when you ought to have forty-five."

But about five o'clock, the five other Gascons arrived, and the number of guests was complete.

Never was such surprise painted on so many Gascon faces. For an hour at least, there was nothing but "*Sandiox!*" "*Mordiox!*" "*Cap de Bioux!*" transports of joy so noisy that it seemed to the Fournichons that all

Saintonge, all Poitou, the whole of Languedoc, had collected in their great hall.

Some were known to each other: and Eustache de Miradoux embraced the cavalier with the two servants, and presented to him Lardille, Militor, and Scipio.

"And by what chance are you in Paris?" demanded the cavalier.

"But yourself, my dear Saint Maline?"

"I have an appointment in the army. And you?"

"I have come about an affair of inheritance."

"Ah, ah! you still drag old Lardille after you?"

"She would follow me."

"Could you not depart secretly, instead of encumbering yourself with the troop she has harnessed to her petticoats?"

"Impossible! it is she who opened the letter of the procureur."

"Ah, you received the news of this inheritance by letter?" said Saint Maline.

"Yes," replied Miradoux.

And hastening to change the conversation—

"Is it not singular that the hostelry should be so full, and full of compatriots?"

"No, it is not singular; the sign is alluring for men of honor," interrupted our old friend, Perducas de Pincornay, mingling in the conversation.

"Ah, ah! it is you, comrade," said Saint Maline; "you have never explained to me what you were telling me on the Place de Grève, when the immense crowd separated us."

"And what am I to explain to you?" said Pincornay, reddening a little.

"How it happens that between Angoulême and Angers, I met you on the road, as I see you to-day, on foot, a switch in your hand, but without a hat on your head?"

"This appears strange to you, monsieur?"

"Why, yes!" said Saint Maline; "Poitiers is far from Paris, and you come from beyond Poitiers."

"I come from Saint André de Cubzac."

"Only think, and this without a hat?"

"Oh, it is very simple."

"I don't see how."

"Yes, and you will understand. My father had two magnificent horses, to which he was attached in such a fashion, that he is very likely to disinherit me after the misfortune that happened to me."

"And what accident has happened to you?"

"I was riding one of them, the handsomest, when it took fright at the report of a gun that was fired close to me and ran away; it made for the bank of the Dordogne, and plunged in."

"Into the water?"

"Completely."

"With you?"

"No; luckily I had time to slide to the ground, or I should have been drowned with him."

"Ah, ah! the poor brute then is drowned?"

"*Pardious!* you know the Dordogne, half a league in width."

"And then?"

"Then I resolved not to enter the house again, and also to withdraw as far as possible from the paternal anger."

"But your hat?"

"Ah, the devil! My hat had fallen off."

"Like yourself?"

"I did not fall; I slid to the ground; a Pincornay never falls from his horse, the Pincornays are equestrians from their cradles."

"That is well known," said Saint Maline, "but your hat?"

"Ah! my hat?"

"Yes."

"My hat fell then; I set about looking for it; it was my only resource, as I had left without money."

"And how could your hat be a resource to you?" inquired Saint Maline, determined to drive Pincornay to the wall.

"*Sandieux!* a very great one! I must tell you that the plume of this hat was fastened by a clasp, which his majesty Charles the Fifth gave to my grandfather, when, in journeying from Spain to Flanders, he rested at our château."

"Ah, ah! and you have sold your clasp, and the hat with it. In that case, my dear friend, you ought to be the richest of us all, and with the money from your clasp you ought to have bought a second glove; your hands are not alike, one is as white as a woman's the other is as black as a negro's."

"But listen, as I turned round to look for my hat, I saw an enormous raven pounce upon it from above."

"On your hat?"

"Or rather my diamond. You know that this animal steals anything that sparkles. He pounced on my diamond, and stole it from me."

"Your diamond?"

"Yes, monsieur. At first I followed him with my eyes; afterwards, I ran and cried, 'Stop, stop, thief!' *Peste!* in about five minutes he had disappeared, and not a word have I heard of him since."

"So that, overcome by this double loss——"

"I did not dare to return home, and decided upon coming to Paris to seek my fortune."

"Good," said a third, "the wind has changed into a crow. It seems to me I heard you tell M. de Loignac that, while you were reading a letter from your mistress, the wind had carried off both letter and hat, and that, like a veritable Amadis, you ran after the letter, leaving the hat to pursue its own course!"

"Monsieur," said Saint Maline, "I have the honor of knowing M. d'Aubigné, who, though a very brave soldier, knows also how to use his pen. When you meet him

relate to him the history of your hat, and he will make a famous tale of it."

Some half-stifled laughter was heard.

"Eh, gentlemen," said the irritable Gascon, "do you laugh at me perchance?"

Every one turned round, to laugh more at ease.

Perducas threw a glance around him, and observed, near the chimney, a young man hiding his face in his hands. He thought it was to laugh.

He went to him.

"Eh, monsieur," he said, "if you laugh, at least laugh openly, that we may see your face."

And he struck the shoulder of the young man who looked up with a grave and severe countenance.

The young man was no other than our friend Ernauton de Carmainges, still completely stupefied by his adventure at the Grève.

"I beg you will leave me alone, monsieur," he said to him; "and especially if you touch me again, do so with the hand that has the glove on it; you can see that I was not thinking about you."

"Very well," grumbled Pincornay, "if you were not thinking about me I have nothing to say."

"Ah! monsieur," said Eustache de Miradoux to Carmainges, with the most conciliating intentions, "you are not gracious towards our countryman."

"And why the devil do you interfere, monsieur?" said Ernauton, more and more annoyed.

"You are right, monsieur," said Miradoux, bowing, "it is no business of mine."

And he turned on his heels to rejoin Lardille, seated in a corner of the large chimney; but some one barred his passage. It was Militor, with his two hands in his belt and his crafty sneer on his lips.

"Come, step-father," said the scamp.

"Well!"

"What have you to say about it?"

"About what?"

"The fashion in which this gentleman silenced you."

"Eh?"

"He knocked you about in a right good fashion."

"Ah! you remarked that, did you?" said Eustache, attempting to pass Militor.

But the latter defeated the manœuvre, by turning to the left and again facing him.

"Not only myself," continued Militor, "but every one else: see how they all laugh round us."

The fact was that they did laugh, but no more at this than anything else.

Eustache became as red as fire.

"Come, come, step-father, don't let the affair get cold," said Militor.

Eustache drew himself up, and approached De Carmainges.

"It is said, monsieur," he said to him, "that you intended to be particularly disagreeable to me."

"When was that?"

"Just now."

"To you?"

"To me."

"And who pretends this?"

"Monsieur," said Eustache, pointing to Militor.

"Then, monsieur," replied Carmainges, dwelling ironically on the qualification, "in that case *monsieur* is a goose."

"Oh! oh!" said Militor, furious.

"And I beg him," continued Carmainges, "not to come here troubling me with his impertinence or I shall remember the opinion of M. de Loignac."

"M. de Loignac did not say I was a goose, monsieur."

"No, he said you were an ass; do you prefer that? It matters little to me; if you are an ass, I will strap you; if you are a goose, I will pluck you."

"Monsieur," said Eustache, "he is my step-son, treat him more gently, I beg, for my sake."

"Ah, see how you defend me, step-father," exclaimed Militor, exasperated. "If this is the way, I can defend myself better alone."

"To school with these children," said Ernauton, "to school!"

"To school!" exclaimed Militor, advancing with clenched fist towards M. de Carmainges; "I am seventeen—do you understand?"

"And I am twenty-five," said Ernauton; "and I shall therefore punish you according to your deserts."

And, seizing him by his collar and belt he raised him from the ground, as he would a bundle, and threw him from the window of the *rez-de-chaussée* into the street; while Lardille yelled loud enough to crack the walls.

"Now," added Ernauton, quietly, "step-father, step-mother, step-son, and all the rest, I will make mince-meat of any one who disturbs me again."

"Faith!" said Miradoux, "I think he is right. Why excite the gentleman?"

"Oh! coward, coward! who allows his son to be beaten!" exclaimed Lardille, advancing towards Eustache, and clutching his scattered hair.

"There, there, there!" said Eustache, "quiet; it will do him good, and cure his temper."

"Ah! there, say, then, do they throw men out of the window here?" said an officer, entering; "the devil! when you get to these sort of jokes, you should at least cry, 'Look out, below there.'"

"Monsieur de Loignac!" exclaimed twenty voices.

"Monsieur de Loignac!" repeated the forty-five.

At this name, known throughout Gascony, every one rose, and was silent.

CHAPTER IX.

MONSIEUR DE LOIGNAC.

BEHIND M. de Loignac came Militor, bruised by his fall, and crimson with rage.

"Your servant, gentlemen," said Loignac, "we make a great noise, I think. Ah! ah! Maître Militor has again been vicious, it seems, and his nose suffers for it."

"I shall be paid," grumbled Militor, shaking his fist at Carmainges.

"Supper, Maître Fournichon," cried Loignac, "and from this moment let all be friends and love one another like brothers."

"Humph," said Sainte Maline.

"Charity is scarce," said Chalabre, spreading his napkin over his iron-gray doublet; so that however abundant might be the sauces, no accident should happen to him.

"And to love one another so tenderly is difficult," added Ernauton; "it is true we are not together for long."

"Look," said Pincornay, in whose heart Sainte Maline's raillery still rankled, "I am laughed at because I have no hat, and they say nothing to M. de Monterabeau, who is going to supper with a cuirass of the time of Emperor Pertinax, from whom, in all probability, he is descended; this is being on the defensive."

Monterabeau, annoyed, stood up, and in a treble voice:

"Gentlemen," said he, "I take it off; a hint to those who would rather see me with arms offensive, than with arms defensive."

And he majestically unlaced his cuirass, making a sign to his lackey, a graybeard of fifty, to come and help him.

"Come! peace, peace!" said M. de Loignac, "and let us go to table."

"Rid me of this cuirass, I beg of you," said Pertinax to his lackey.

The tall fellow took it in his arms.

"And am I not to dine?" he said to him in a low tone. "Let me have something, Pertinax; I am dying of hunger."

Pertinax instead of being offended at this familiar address replied,

"I will do my best, but you had better try to get something for yourself."

"Hem!" said the lackey, in a disagreeable tone, "that is not very cheering."

"Have you absolutely no money left?" demanded Pertinax.

"We spent our last crown at Sens."

"The devil! then try to sell something."

He had scarcely spoken when a cry was heard in the street, and presently on the step of the inn door.

"Old iron to buy! who'll sell his sword, his old iron?"

At this cry, Madame Fournichon ran to the door, while Fournichon majestically transported the first dishes to the table.

If we may judge by its reception, the cuisine of Fournichon must have been delicious.

Fournichon, unable to face all the compliments addressed to him, wanted to admit his wife to share them. He looked for her, but in vain; she had disappeared.

He called her.

"What is she doing?" he inquired of a scullion, finding she did not appear.

"Ah! master, a golden bargain," replied the latter. "She is selling all your old iron for new silver."

"I hope there is no question about my cuirass or my battle arms!" exclaimed Fournichon, rushing towards the door.

"No, no," said Loignac, "for the purchase of arms is forbidden by an order of the king."

"Never mind," said Fournichon, and he ran towards the door.

Madame Fournichon entered triumphant.

"Well! what's the matter?" she said, seeing her husband all amazed.

"I heard you are selling my arms."

"Well?"

"I will not have them sold."

"Bah! now we are at peace, two new saucepans are well worth an old cuirass."

"Nevertheless the trade in old iron must be rather languishing since the king's edict which M. de Loignac has just mentioned," said Chalabre.

"On the contrary, monsieur," said Dame Fournichon, "and for a long time this same merchant has tried me with his offers. Faith! To-day, I could not resist; and seeing the opportunity, I seized it. Ten crowns, monsieur, are ten crowns, and an old cuirass is always an old cuirass!"

"How, ten crowns!" said Chalabre; "as dear as that? the devil!"

And he became thoughtful.

"Ten crowns!" repeated Pertinax, casting an eloquent glance at his lackey, "do you hear, Monsieur Samuel?"

Monsieur Samuel was no longer there.

"It seems to me," said M. de Loignac, "that this merchant is carrying on a dangerous trade."

"Oh! he is a very honest man, very gentle, and very straightforward," said Madame Fournichon.

"But what does he do with all this old iron?"

"He sells it again by weight."

"By weight!" said Loignac; "and you say he gave you ten crowns, for what?"

"For an old cuirass and an old head-piece."

"Supposing they weigh twenty pounds, it is half a

crown a pound. *Parfandious!* as says some one of my acquaintance, this hides some mystery."

"If I could but catch this honest merchant in my château," said Chalabre, his eyes sparkling, "I would sell him three million pounds weight of head-pieces, arm-pieces and cuirasses."

"What! you would sell the arms of your ancestors!" said Saint Maline, in a jesting tone.

"Ah, monsieur," said Eustache de Miradoux, "that would be wrong; they are sacred relics."

"Bah!" said Chalabre; "at the present moment, my ancestors are relics themselves, and need nothing but masses."

The repast was getting animated, thanks to the Burgundy, of which Fournichon's spices had increased the consumption.

The voices rose to a higher pitch, the dishes rattled, the brains filled with vapors, through which the Gascons saw everything *couleur de rose*, except Militor, who thought of his fall, and Carmainges, who thought of his page.

"See how many men there are enjoying themselves," said Loignac to his neighbor, who was no other than Ernauton, "and they know not why."

"Nor I neither," replied Carmainges; "but then I am an exception, and I am not joyful at all."

"You are wrong, as to yourself," said Loignac; "for you are of those for whom Paris is a mine of gold, a paradise of honors, a world of happiness!"

Ernauton shook his head.

"Well! we shall see!"

"Do not jest at me, M. de Loignac," said Ernauton; "and as you appear to hold the threads which move the majority of us, do me at least the favor not to treat the Vicomte de Carmainges as if he were a puppet."

"I will do you other favors besides this, Monsieur le Vicomte," said Loignac, bowing politely; "I distinguished you at the first glance that passed between us; your eye

is haughty and gentle; and that of the other young man yonder is dull and crafty."

"What is his name?"

"Monsieur de Sainte Maline."

"And why this distinction, if my question be not too curious?"

"I know you, nothing more."

"Me!" said Ernauton, surprised, "me, you say you know me?"

"You and him—and all who are here."

"It is strange!"

"Yes, but necessary."

"Why is it necessary?"

"Because a chief should know his soldiers."

"And all these men——"

"Will be my soldiers to-morrow."

"But I thought that M. d'Epernon——"

"Hush! do not pronounce that name here, or rather pronounce no name here; open your ears and shut your mouth; and since I have promised you all favors, take this advice as one of them."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Ernauton.

Loignac wiped his mustache, and rose.

"Gentlemen," said he, "since chance assembles here forty-five countrymen, let us empty a glass of this Spanish wine to the prosperity of the company."

This proposition drew forth the loudest applause.

"They are most of them drunk," said Loignac to Ernauton, "it would be a good opportunity to make each one tell his history, but we have not the time."

Then raising his voice,

"Halloa! Maître Fournichon," said he, "dismiss from the room all the women, children, and lackeys."

Lardille retired grumbling; she had not finished her dessert.

Militor moved not an inch.

"Did they hear me, below there," said Loignac, with a

glance which admitted of no reply ; " come, come, to the kitchen, Monsieur Militor."

In a few moments there remained in the hall only the forty-five guests of M.de Loignac.

" Gentlemen," said the latter, " each of you knows who called him to Paris, or at least suspects it. Good ! good ! never mind his name, you know it, that is sufficient. You know also that you have come to obey him."

A murmur of assent rose from every part of the hall ; as each man knew the affair that concerned him, and was ignorant that his neighbor had come, moved by the same power as himself, they looked at each other with astonishment.

" Very good," said Loignac, " you will look at one another by-and-by ; you have time to become acquainted. You have come, then, to obey this man ; do you acknowledge this? "

" Yes, yes," cried the forty-five, " we acknowledge it."

" Then, to begin," continued Loignac, " you will quietly leave this hotel and go to the lodgings prepared for you."

" All ?" said Sainte Maline.

" All."

" We are all commanded, we are all equal," said Perducas, whose legs were so unsteady that, in order to maintain his centre of gravity, he was forced to put his arm round Chalabre's neck.

" Take care," said the latter ; " you are spoiling my doublet."

" Yes, all equal," said Loignac, " before the will of the master."

" Oh ! oh ! monsieur," said Carmainges, reddening, " pardon ! but I was not told that M. d'Epernon would call himself my master."

" Wait ! "

" This is not what I understood."

" But wait, Then confound your head ! "

There was a silence of curiosity on the part of many, and on the part of others a silence of impatience.

"I have not told you yet who will be your master, gentlemen."

"Yes," said Sainte Maline; "but you said we should have one."

"Every one has a master," said Loignac; "but if you are too proud to acknowledge him we spoke of, you may look higher."

"The king," murmured Carmaingès.

"Silence," said Loignac; "you have come here to obey; obey, then. Meanwhile, here is an order you will please read aloud, Monsieur Ernauton."

Ernauton slowly unfolded the parchment handed to him by De Loignac, and read, in a loud voice:

"Order to M. de Loignac to take command of the forty-five gentlemen whom I have summoned to Paris, with the consent of his Majesty.

"NOGARET DE LA VALETTE, Duc d'Epèrnon."

Drunk or sober, all bowed, there was no inequality save in the equilibrium, when they attempted to rise.

"You have understood me, then," said M. de Loignac; "it is requisite that you should follow me at once. Your horses and servants will remain here with Maître Fournichon, who will take care of them, and I will have them fetched by-and-by; but for the present, make haste; the boats are waiting."

"The boats!" repeated the Gascons; "we are then to embark?"

And they exchanged looks full of curiosity.

"Undoubtedly," said Loignac, "you are about to embark. To go to the Louvre, must we not cross the water?"

"To the Louvre, to the Louvre," murmured the joyful Gascons. "*Cup de Biens!* we are going to the Louvre!"

Loignac left the table, made the forty-five pass before him, counting them like sheep, and led them through the streets as far as the Tour de Nesle.

There they found three large barges, each of which took fifteen passengers on board, and immediately left the shore.

"What the devil are we going to do at the Louvre?" thought the bravest, made sober by the cold air of the river, and for the most part very thinly clad.

"If I only had my cuirass," murmured Pertinax de Monterabeau.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN WITH THE CUIRASS.

PERTINAX had good reason to regret his absent cuirass, for just at this hour, through the mediation of the singular lackey who spoke to his master in so familiar a manner, he had parted with it forever.

In fact, as soon as the valet of Pertinax heard the magic words, "ten crowns," pronounced by Madame Fournichon, he ran after the merchant.

As it was already dark, and as probably the iron dealer was in a hurry, the latter had already gone some distance when Samuel left the hotel.

Samuel was therefore obliged to call to him.

The latter stopped in fear, and threw a piercing glance at the man who was approaching him, but seeing him loaded with merchandise, he stopped.

"What do you want, my friend?" he said to him.

"Eh, *pardieu!*" said the lackey, "I want to do a little business with you."

"Well, then, be quick."

"Are you in a hurry?"

"Yes."

"Oh! just give me time to breathe; the devil!"

"Undoubtedly: but breathe quickly; some one is waiting for me."

It was evident that the merchant felt some distrust of the lackey.

"When you have seen what I bring you," said the latter, "as you seem to be an amateur, you will be willing to wait."

"And what do you bring me?"

"A magnificent piece: a work which—but you are not listening to me."

"No, I am looking."

"Why?"

"Do you not know, my friend," said the dealer, "that it is forbidden to buy arms?"

And he threw suspicious glances about him.

Samuel thought it best to feign ignorance.

"I know nothing myself, I have just come from Monte de Marsan."

"Ah! that makes a difference," said the man, who seemed quieted by this reply; "but you have just arrived from Monte de Marsan," he continued, "and you already know that I purchase arms?"

"Yes, I know it."

"And who told you so?"

"*Sang dioux!* I wanted no one to tell me so, for you cried it loud enough just now."

"Where?"

"At the door of the Brave Chevalier."

"You were there, then?"

"Yes."

"With whom?"

"With a crowd of friends."

"With a crowd of friends? There is seldom any one of consequence at that inn."

"Then you must have found it much changed."

"Just so. But whence came all these friends?"

"From Gascony, like myself."

"Do you belong to the King of Navarre?"

"Come, now, we are Frenchmen, heart and soul."

"Yes; but Huguenots?"

"Catholics, like our holy father, the pope, thank God," said Samuel, doffing his cap; "but our business is not of that; it has to do with the cuirass."

"Well, come under this portico; the street is too public."

And they advanced a few steps towards a house of modest appearance, at the windows of which no lights were to be seen.

The door of this house was under a sort of shed, forming a balcony. A stone bench ran along the façade, and was its only ornament.

It was both useful and agreeable, and served as a stepping-stone for the passers-by to mount their horses and mules.

"Now let me see this cuirass," said the merchant, when they were under the portico.

"Here."

"Wait; they are stirring in the house, I think."

"No, it is opposite."

The merchant turned round.

In fact, opposite, there was a house with two stories, the second of which was lighted up at intervals.

"Let us do it quickly," said the merchant, feeling the cuirass.

"See, how heavy it is," said Samuel.

"Old—massive—out of fashion."

"A work of art."

"I will give you six crowns."

"What, six crowns! and you gave ten just now for the remains of an old corselet."

"Six crowns, yes or no!" repeated the merchant.

"But look at the chasing."



HENRY OF NAVARRE.

"Of what use is the chasing, when I sell by weight?"

"Oh! oh! you bargain here," said Samuel, "and at the inn you gave just what they asked."

"I will add another crown," said the merchant, impatiently.

"The gilding alone is worth fourteen crowns."

"Come, make up your mind," said the merchant.

"Good," said Samuel, "you are a queer merchant. You go against the law, and then endeavor to cheat honest people."

"Come, come, don't talk so loud."

"Oh! I'm not afraid," said Samuel, raising his voice. "I do not carry on an illicit trade, and nothing forces *me* to conceal myself."

"Well! come take ten crowns, and hold your tongue."

"Ten crowns! I tell you that the gold alone is worth the money; ah! you want to escape?"

"No, no! what a madman!"

"Ah! if you attempt to escape, I shall call the guard!"

In saying these words, Samuel had raised his voice, so that he might as well have fulfilled his threat without making it.

At this noise a small window was opened on the balcony of the house against which the bargain was made, and the merchant heard with terror the creaking made in opening it.

"Come, come," said he, "I see I must give you what you want—take fifteen crowns, and off with you."

"With all my heart," said Samuel, pocketing the fifteen crowns.

"Very good."

"But these fifteen crowns are for my master," continued Samuel, "and I must have a trifle for myself."

The dealer looked round him, half-drawing his dagger. Evidently, he had intended to make such a rent in Samuel's skin as would forever prevent his purchasing a cuirass to replace the one he had sold, but Samuel had an eye

as sharp as a sparrow picking up crumbs, and drew back, saying :

“Yes, yes, good merchant, I see your dagger, but I also see something else; that figure on the balcony, who is watching you.”

The merchant, pale with fright, looked in the direction indicated by Samuel, and saw on the balcony a tall, fantastic creature, enveloped in a dressing-gown with cat-skin furs; this argus had lost neither a syllable nor a gesture of this last scene.

“Well, well, you do just as you like with me,” said the man, with a grin like that of a hyena showing his teeth; “here is another crown, and may the devil choke you,” he added, quietly.

“Thank you,” said Samuel, “I wish you good trade.”

And saluting the man with the cuirasses, he disappeared with a smile.

The dealer, left alone in the street, lifted the cuirass of Pertinax and enclosed it in Fournichon’s.

The bourgeois still looked on, and when he saw the merchant well loaded :

“It seems, monsieur,” he said to him, “that you buy armor.”

“Why, no, monsieur,” replied the unlucky merchant; “this was a mere chance, and because the opportunity presented itself.”

“A chance that suits me wonderfully well.”

“In what respect, monsieur?” demanded the merchant.

“Only fancy that I have here, just within reach, a heap of old iron that I want to be rid of.”

“I do not doubt you, but for the moment, you see, I have as much as I can carry.”

“But let me show them to you.”

“It is useless, I have no money.”

“Never mind, I will give you credit; you look like an honest man.”

“Thank you, but I have some one waiting for me.”

"It is odd, but I seem to know you!" said the bourgeois.

"Me?" said the merchant, endeavoring in vain to repress a shudder.

"Look at this head-piece," said the bourgeois, pulling with his long foot the object alluded to, for he would not quit the window fearing lest the merchant should steal away. He placed the head-piece on the balcony and handed it to the dealer.

"You know me," said the latter; "that is, you think you know me?"

"That is, I do know you. Are you not——"

The bourgeois appeared to think; the merchant remained motionless, waiting.

"Are you not Nicholas?"

The dealer's countenance changed; the helmet trembled in his hand.

"Nicholas?" he repeated.

"Nicholas Trouchon, ironmonger, Rue de la Cossonnerie?"

"No, no," replied the merchant, smiling, and breathing more freely.

"Never mind, you have a good face and you must buy my whole armor, cuirass, armlets and sword."

"It is forbidden commerce, monsieur."

"I know it; the man with whom you dealt just now called it out loud enough."

"You heard?"

"Perfectly; you were even liberal in the affair, and that gave me the idea of trading with you; but be easy, I shall not be hard upon you. I have been a trader myself."

"Ah! what did you sell?"

"What did I sell?"

"Yes."

"Favors."

"A good trade, monsieur."

"And therefore I made my fortune at it, and you see me a bourgeois."

"I congratulate you."

"And consequently I like to take comfort; I sell all my old iron because it is in my way."

"I understand that."

"Here are also the thigh pieces. Ah! and the gloves."

"But I have no use for all this."

"Nor I."

"I will simply take the cuirass."

"You buy only cuirasses, then?"

"Yes."

"That is odd, for if you buy to sell again by weight, as you said, one sort of iron is as good as another."

"That is true, but I have preferences——"

"As you please, buy the cuirass; or perhaps you are right, buy nothing at all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in these times every one wants his arms."

"What! in a settled peace?"

"My dear friend, if we were in a settled peace, there would not be such a demand for cuirasses. *Ventre de biche!* you must not tell me such things."

"Monsieur!"

"And so secret too."

The dealer made a movement to leave.

"But really, the more I look at you," said the bourgeois, "the more I know your face. No, you are not Nicholas Troughon, but I know you all the same."

"Silence."

"And if you buy the cuirasses——"

"Well?"

"Well! I am sure it is to accomplish a work agreeable to the Almighty."

"Hold your tongue!"

"You enchant me," said the bourgeois, stretching a

long arm over the balcony and seizing the hand of the dealer.

"But who the devil are you?" demanded the latter, who felt his hand clutched in a vise.

"I am Robert Briquet, surnamed the terror of schism, a friend of the union, and a fierce Catholic; now, I positively recognize you."

The merchant again turned white.

"You are Nicholas—Grimbelot, leather currier."

"No, you are wrong; adieu, Maître Robert Briquet; delighted to have made your acquaintance."

And the merchant turned his back to the balcony.

"What! you are going?"

"You see that I am."

"Without taking my iron?"

"I have no money about me; I told you so."

"My valet can go with you."

"Impossible."

"What is to be done then?"

"Remain as we are."

"*Ventre de biche!* that doesn't suit me; I am too desirous to cultivate your friendship."

"And I to fly from yours," replied the merchant, who, resigning himself to abandon his cuirasses, and lose all rather than be recognized, took to his heels and fled.

But Robert Briquet was not a man to be foiled. He cleared the balcony, descended into the street, almost without being obliged to jump, and in five or six strides reached the merchant.

"Are you mad, my friend?" he said, placing his large hand on the poor devil's shoulder. "If I were your enemy, if I wished to arrest you, I have but to cry out; the watch passes at this hour in the Rue des Augustins. But you are my friend, or the devil fetch me, and the proof is that now I positively remember your name."

This time the dealer burst into a laugh.

Robert Briquet placed himself opposite to him.

"Your name is Nicholas Poulain," he said: "you are lieutenant of the provostship of Paris; I knew it was Nicholas something."

"I am lost!" murmured the man.

"On the contrary; you are saved. *Ventre de biche!* you will never do as much for the good cause as I have the intention of doing."

Nicholas Poulain uttered a groan.

"Come, come, courage," said Robert Briquet, "recover yourself, you have found a brother, brother Briquet. Take one cuirass, I will take the two others; I give you my gloves and the rest of my armor for nothing."

"You accompany me?"

"I will help you to carry these cuirasses which are to conquer the Philistines; show me the way, I follow you."

A spark of suspicion lingered in the soul of the unfortunate lieutenant, but he thought, "If he wished to ruin me, would he have acknowledged that he knew me?"

"Well, since you absolutely wish it, come with me," he added aloud.

"For life or death!" said Robert Briquet, squeezing with one hand the hand of his friend; whilst with the other he triumphantly raised in the air his bundle of iron.

The two then set out.

After walking about twenty minutes, Nicholas Poulain reached the Marais. He was bathed in a perspiration caused as much by the rapidity of his journey as by the heat of their political conversation.

"What a recruit I have made!" murmured Nicholas Poulain, stopping at a short distance from the Hôtel de Guise.

"I suspected my armor was coming around here," thought Robert Briquet.

"Friend," said Nicholas Poulain, turning round to Robert Briquet, with a tragical gesture, "before entering the lion's den, I give you a last moment for reflection;

you have time to retire, if your conscience is not over strong."

"Bah!" said Briquet, "I have entered many others, *et non intremuit medulla mea*," he declaimed; "ah! pardon me; you do not know Latin, perhaps?"

"You do, it seems."

"As you see."

"Learned, bold, active, rich; what a friend!" said Poulain to himself; "come, let us enter."

And he conducted Briquet to a gigantic door of the Hôtel de Guise, which opened at the third blow of the bronze knocker.

The court was filled with guards and men wrapped in their cloaks, who wandered about like phantoms.

There was not a single light in the hotel. Eight horses, saddled and bridled, waited in a corner. The noise of the hammer caused most of the men to turn round, and they formed a sort of hedge to receive the new-comers.

Nicholas Poulain, then, whispering in the ear of a sort of concierge, who held the wicket half open, mentioned his name.

"And I bring a good companion," he said.

"Pass on," said the concierge.

"Carry this to the magazine," said Poulain, handing the three cuirasses and Robert Briquet's iron to the guard.

"Good, so there is a magazine here," said Briquet to himself, "better and better; *peste!* what a manager you are, Messire Prévôt."

"Yes, yes; we have judgment," replied Poulain, smiling with pride; "but come, let me present you."

"Take care," said the bourgeois, "I am excessively timid. If I am tolerated, it is all I desire; when I have given proofs I will present myself alone, as the Greek says, through my deeds."

"As you like," replied the lieutenant of the provostship; "wait for me here, then."

And he shook hands with most of the men.

"What are we waiting for?" demanded a voice.

"The master," replied another voice.

At this moment a tall man entered the hotel; he had heard the last words exchanged between the mysterious individuals.

"Gentlemen, I come in his name."

"Ah! it is Monsieur de Mayneville," exclaimed Poulain.

"And here I am in company of friends," said Robert Briquet to himself, and making a hideous grimace which completely disfigured him.

"Gentlemen, we are all here; let us deliberate," continued the voice which had first spoken.

"Ah, good," said Briquet, "another; this one is my procureur, Maître Marteau."

And he changed the grimace with a facility which proved how familiar to him were the physiognomical studies.

"Let us go up, gentlemen," said Poulain.

M. de Mayneville led the way; Nicholas Poulain followed him, the men with the cloaks came after Nicholas Poulain, and Robert Briquet brought up the rear.

All ascended the steps of an outer staircase, ending in a vaulted room.

Robert Briquet mounted with the others, murmuring all the while:

"But the page—where, then, is this devil of a page?"

CHAPTER XI.

MORE OF THE LEAGUE.

JUST as Robert Briquet mounted the stairs behind the others, giving himself, as much as possible, the air of a conspirator, he observed that Nicholas Poulain, after speaking to several of his colleagues, waited at the door of the vault.

"This must be for me," said Robert to himself.

In fact, the lieutenant stopped his new friend at the very moment he was about to cross the formidable threshold.

"You will not be angry with me," he said to him, "but most of our friends do not know you, and wish to have some information about you before admitting you to the council."

"It is only fair," replied Robert, "and you know that my natural modesty had already anticipated this objection."

"I do justice to you," replied Poulain, "you are an accomplished man."

"I retire, then," pursued Briquet, "very happy to have seen in one night so many brave defenders of the Catholic Union."

"Do you wish me to reconduct you?" said Poulain.

"No, thank you; it is not worth while."

"But perhaps they will not open for you; yet, on the other hand, I am wanted."

"Have you not a pass-word? I do not recognize you there, Maître Nicholas; it is not prudent."

"Yes."

"Well, give it me."

"After all, since you have entered——"

"And since we are friends."

"Just so; you have only to say—*Parma and Lorraine*."

"And the porter will open to me?"

"At the same moment."

"Very well; thank you. Go to your business. I return to mine."

Nicholas Poulain parted from his companion and joined his colleagues.

Briquet took a few steps, as if to go out; but having reached the first step of the staircase, he stopped to explore the locality.

As a result of his observations, he conjectured that the archway ran parallel to the exterior wall, which it sheltered by a large shed. It was evident that this archway led to some lower hall, fitted for this mysterious council from which Briquet had been excluded.

What confirmed him in this supposition, which soon became a certainty, was, that he saw a light appear at a grated window, pierced in the wall, and guarded by a sort of wooden pipe, such as is now placed at the windows of prisons or convents, to intercept the sight from without and leave only the air and the sight of heaven.

Briquet rightly supposed that this window was that of the hall of assembly, and thought that if he could but reach it, the position would be favorable to an observation. Placed at this observatory the eye might easily supply the other senses.

But the difficulty was to reach this observatory, and to secure a place where he might see without being seen. Briquet looked round him.

In the court were the pages with their horses, the soldiers with their halberds, and the porter with his keys, all quick and sharp-sighted people.

Luckily the court was extensive, and the night dark.

Besides, pages and soldiers having seen the conspirators

disappear beneath the archway, troubled themselves no further, and the porter, knowing the doors well closed, and the impossibility of their leaving without the pass-word, busied himself preparing his bed for the night, and attending to a nice pot of spiced wine which simmered on the fire.

In curiosity, there are stimulants as strong as in the excitement of any other passion. This craving after knowledge is so great, that it has caused the death of more than one discoverer.

Briquet had already obtained too much information not to wish to complete his store. He again looked round him, and, fascinated by the light which the window threw against the iron bars, he fancied he saw in this reflection a sign of appeal, and in the shining bars, some provocation for his robust wrists.

In consequence, having resolved to reach this funnel, Briquet glided along the cornice which extended from the doorstep (which it seemed to continue as an ornament) to this window; he ran along the wall like a monkey, holding on with his hands and feet to the ornaments of the sculpture.

Had the pages and soldiers distinguished in the darkness this fantastic figure gliding along the middle of the wall, without apparent support, they would certainly not have failed to cry out "magic!" and more than one of them, among the bravest, would have felt his hair stand on end.

But Robert Briquet left them no time to observe his witcheries.

In four strides, he touched the bars, clung to them, squeezed himself between the bars and the funnel, in such a manner that from without he could not be seen, and that from within he was almost masked by the grating.

Briquet was not deceived, and he was amply rewarded for his trouble and audacity.

His sight then embraced a vast hall, lighted by an iron lamp with four branches, and filled with armor of every

sort, among which, by searching well, he might certainly have recognized his gorget and armlets.

The pikes, long swords, halberds, and muskets collected there and ranged in piles or festoons, would have sufficed to arm four good regiments.

Briquet, however, paid less attention to the superb display of arms than to the assembly engaged in putting them in use or in distributing them. His burning eyes pierced through the thick window covered with a dense mass of smoke and dust, in order to guess at the faces of friends under the visors or hoods.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "here is Maitre Cruce, our revolutionary, and our little Brigard, the grocer at the corner of the Ruedes Lombards; here is Maitre Leclerc, who calls himself Bussy, and who would certainly not have committed such a sacrilege whilst the real Bussy was alive. I must one day ask this old fencing-master if he knows the secret box in which a certain David of my acquaintance died at Lyons. *Peste!* the bourgeoisie are superbly represented, but the nobility!—Ah! Monsieur de Mayneville, may God forgive me, he is shaking hands with Nicholas Poulain! What a touching fraternity. Ah! ah! this Monsieur de Mayneville is an orator, then? he is preparing, I think, to make a speech. He has an agreeable manner, and rolls his eyes in a persuasive fashion."

And, in fact, M. de Mayneville had begun an oration.

Robert Briquet shook his head whilst M. de Mayneville spoke, not that he could hear a word of the subject, but he interpreted his gestures and those of the assembly.

"He does not seem to carry his audience with him; Cruce makes faces at him, Lachapelle Marteau turns his back, and Bussy Leclerc shrugs his shoulders. Come, come, M. de Mayneville, speak, perspire, get out of breath, be eloquent. *Ventre de biche!* oh! at length the audience is moved. Oh! oh! they get together, they shake hands; they throw their caps in the air. The devil!"

Briquet, as we have said, could see but could not hear;

but we, who are present in spirit at the deliberation of the stormy meeting, will inform the reader of what took place.

In the first place, Cruce, Marteau, and Bussy, complained to M. de Mayneville of the inaction of the Duke de Guise.

Marteau, in his quality of procureur, was spokesman.

“Monsieur de Mayneville,” he said, “you appear on the part of the Duke Henri de Guise? Thank you. And we accept you as ambassador; but the presence of the duke is indispensable. After the death of his glorious father, he, when only eighteen years of age, made all good Frenchmen join this project of the Union, and enrolled us under this banner. According to our oath, we have risked our lives and sacrificed our fortunes for the triumph of this sacred cause. And yet, in spite of our sacrifices, nothing progresses—nothing is decided. Take care, Monsieur de Mayneville, the Parisians will grow tired; but Paris once wearied, what will they do in France? M. the Duke should think of this.”

This speech obtained the assent of all the Leaguers, and Nicholas Poulain, especially, distinguished himself by his zeal in applauding.

M. de Mayneville replied with candor:

“Gentlemen, if nothing is decided, it is because nothing is yet ripe. I beg you to consider our situation. The Duke and his brother the cardinal are at Nancy, making observations. The one is organizing an army intended to keep in check the Huguenots of Flanders, which the Duke of Anjou would throw upon us to occupy us; the other sends courier after courier to all the clergy of France and to the pope, to induce them to adopt the union. The Duke de Guise knows what you do not, that the old alliance between the Duke of Anjou and the Bearnais, is ready to be renewed. They find it necessary to occupy the Spaniards near Navarre, and to prevent them from sending us arms and money. But the Duke, before attempting anything, and especially before arriving in Paris, wishes to be in a state to combat heresy

and usurpation. But in the absence of M. de Guise we have M. de Mayenne, who multiplies himself as a general and as a councillor, and whom I expect at any moment."

"That means," interrupted Bussy, and it was at this moment he shrugged his shoulders, "that means that your princes are everywhere where they are not wanted, and never where we want them to be. What is Madame de Montpensier doing, for instance?"

"Monsieur, Madame de Montpensier entered Paris this morning."

"No one has seen her?"

"Some one has seen her, monsieur."

"Who?"

"Salcede."

"Oh! oh!" cried all.

"But," said Cruce, "has she then made herself invisible?"

"Not at all, but unseizable, I trust."

"And how does any one know that she is here," inquired Nicholas Poulain; "I presume it was not Salcede who told you so?"

"I know that she is here," replied Mayneville, "because I accompanied her to the Porte Saint Antoine."

"I heard that they had closed the gates," interrupted Marteau, who was anxious for an opportunity to make a second speech.

"Yes, sir," replied Mayneville, with his unvarying politeness, of which no attack could deprive him.

"How did she pass?"

"In her own fashion."

"Has she the power to open the gates of Paris?" said the Leaguers, jealous and suspicious, as the common people always are when allied with the great.

"Gentlemen," said Mayneville, "something took place at the gates of Paris this morning, of which you appear ignorant. The orders were to open only to those who brought a card of admission,—signed I know not now by whom. But before our eyes, at the Porte Saint Antoine, five or six

men, four of whom were meanly clad and ill-looking, were bearers of these favored cards, and passed in. Some among them had the insolent buffoonery of men who find themselves in a conquered country. Who are these men? What are these cards? Reply, gentlemen of Paris, you whose duty it is to know everything concerning your city."

Thus Mayneville, from the accused became the accuser, which is a great art in oratory.

"Cards! insolent fellows! exceptional admission to the gates of Paris. Oh! oh! and what does this mean?" demanded Nicholas Poulain, in a deep reverie.

"If you do not know these things, you who live here, how should we know them, we who live in Lorraine, and spend all our time in travelling, to join the two ends of the circle called the Union?"

"And how did these people come?"

"Some on foot, others on horseback; some alone, others with servants."

"Do they belong to the king?"

"Three or four had the appearance of beggars."

"Are they soldiers?"

"They had but two swords amongst six."

"They are strangers?"

"I think they were Gascons."

"Oh!" said some voices, in a tone of contempt.

"Never mind," said Bussy, "were they Turks they must receive our attention. We must find out about them. Monsieur Poulain, that is your business. But all this throws no light on the affairs of the League."

"There is a new plan," replied M. de Mayneville; "you will know to-morrow that Salcede, who had already betrayed us, and who was to betray us again, not only did not speak, but retracted on the scaffold, and this, thanks to the duchess, who, entering in the suite of one of these card-bearers, had the courage to penetrate the crowd even to the place of execution, at the risk of being crushed fifty times, and made herself known to Salcede at the risk of

being recognized. It was at this moment that Salcedo stopped his confession; in another instant our honest executioner stopped his penitent career. Thus, gentlemen, you have nothing to fear as to our enterprises in Flanders. This terrible secret has been sent rolling to the tomb."

It was this last sentence which had so pleased M. de Mayneville's Leaguers.

Briquet guessed their joy by their movements. This joy greatly annoyed the worthy bourgeois, who appeared to take a sudden resolution.

He slid from his funnel to the pavement of the court, and hastened to the door, which the porter, on hearing the two words "Parma and Lorraine," opened for him.

Once in the street, Maître Robert Briquet breathed so lustily, that we may suppose that he had held his breath for some time.

The council continued; history tells us what took place there.

M. de Mayneville brought from the Guises to the future insurgents of Paris the whole plan of the insurrection.

It consisted in nothing less than murdering the most important personages of the city known to be in favor with the king, then running through the streets crying "Vive la Messe—death to the statesmen!" In fact, a second St. Bartholomew was to be enacted, in which, however, all hostile Catholics were to be confounded with the Huguenots.

In so doing they would serve two Gods—the one who reigns in Heaven and the one who was to reign over France.

The Eternal and M. de Guise!

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHAMBER OF HIS MAJESTY, HENRY THE THIRD, AT THE LOUVRE.

IN the great room of the Louvre, which our readers have so often entered with us, and in which we have seen the poor king, Henry the Third, spend so many long and cruel hours, we shall find him once more, no longer king, no longer master, but dejected, pale, uneasy, given up to the persecution of spirits which his memory incessantly evoked beneath these famous arches.

Henry had changed very much since the fatal death of his friends, which we have related elsewhere. This sorrow had passed over his head like a devastating storm, and the poor king, who, remembering that he was a man, had placed his strength and confidence only in private friendship, saw himself deprived by envious death, of all confidence and all strength—thus anticipating the terrible moment in which kings resign themselves to God—without friends, without guardians—and without a crown.

Henry the Third had been cruelly afflicted. All those he loved had successively fallen around him. After Schomberg, Quelus, and Maugiron, killed in duel by Liva-rot and Antraguët, Saint Megrin had been assassinated by M. de Mayenne; the wounds left by their deaths were still fresh and bleeding. The affection he felt for his new favorites, D'Epernon and Joyeuse, resembled that of a father, who, having lost his favored children, falls back upon those who remain to him. While perfectly aware of their faults, he loves them, he indulges them, he cherishes them, that death may have no power over them.

He had loaded D'Epernon with wealth, and yet he only loved him by fits and starts. At certain moments, he hated him. It was then that Catharine, that pitiless counsellor, in whom thought was always on the watch, like the lamp in a tabernacle, it was then that Catharine, incapable of folly, even in her youth, took the voice of the people to blame the affections of the king.

Never had she said to him, when he emptied the treasury to erect into a duchy and royally aggrandize the domain of Lavalette,—never had she said to him: “Sire, hate these men, who do not love you, or, what is much worse, who love you only for themselves.” But if she saw a cloud on the king’s brow, if she heard him in a moment of weariness, accuse D'Epernon of avarice, or of cowardice, she directly found the inflexible word that summed up all the grievances of the people and of royalty against D'Epernon, and ploughed another furrow on the royal hatred.

D'Epernon, an imperfect Gascon, with his finesse and native perversity, had taken the measure of the royal weakness; he knew how to conceal his ambition, which was vague in its aspirations and the object of which was still unknown to himself. His cupidity alone served him as a compass to direct him towards the distant and unexplored world, which still hid from him the horizons of the future, and it was by this cupidity alone that he governed himself.

When the treasury was tolerably well furnished, D'Epernon was seen to appear with his arms rounded and his face wreathed in smiles; was the treasury empty, he disappeared, with scornful lips and knitted brows, to shut himself up either in his hôtel or one of his châteaux, where he bemoaned his fate, until he had drawn some new gift from the weakness of the king.

With him favoritism had become a trade—a trade which he turned to profit. At first he allowed the king no delay in the payments, but when he afterwards became a courtier,

and the capricious winds of royal favor had been sufficiently frequent to solidify his Gascon brains—afterwards, we say, he consented to take upon himself a part of the work; that is, to co-operate in the receipt of the funds which he intended to make his own.

This necessity, he found, compelled him to become, from an idle courtier, which is the best of all the stages, an active courtier, which is the worst of all conditions. He bitterly deplored the easy leisures of Quelus, of Schomberg, and of Maugiron, who themselves had never in their lives mentioned affairs either public or private, and who so easily converted favors into gold and gold into pleasures. But times had changed; the iron age had succeeded the golden age, money came not as formerly; it was necessary to look for the money, to dig for it, in order to take it from the veins of the people, as from a half-exhausted mine. D'Epernon resigned himself, and launched greedily into the inextricable maze of administration, laying waste here and there on his passage, and draining without reckoning the curses, whenever the sound of the golden crowns covered the voice of the people.

The rapid and very incomplete sketch we have traced of the character of Joyeuse, will show the reader the difference between the two favorites, who shared, we will not say the friendship, but that large portion of influence which Henry always allowed those who surrounded him to acquire over himself and over France. Joyeuse, quite naturally, and without reflection, had followed in the footsteps, and adopted the tradition of Quelus, Schomberg, Maugiron, and Saint Megrin; he loved the king, and let himself be loved by him. But all these strange rumors which had sprung up, as to the wonderful friendship the king bore to the predecessors of Joyeuse, had died with the friendships; no unworthy stain sullied the almost paternal affection of Henry for Joyeuse. Of a family of brave and illustrious men, Joyeuse had, at least in public, the respect of royalty, and his familiarity never passed certain limits.

Morally speaking, Joyeuse was a real friend to Henry. Anne was young, passionate, always in love—and when in love, egotistical. It was little for him to be happy through the king, and to return this happiness to its source; it was everything for him to be happy in some way, whatever it might be. Brave, handsome, rich, he shone with that triple reflection which places on the brow of youth a crown of love. Nature had done too much for Joyeuse; and Henry sometimes cursed nature which had left to him, a king, so little to do for his friend.

Henry well knew these two men and loved them, no doubt, for their contrast. Under his sceptical and superstitious covering, Henry concealed a depth of philosophy, which, but for Catharine, would have developed in useful directions.

Often betrayed, Henry was never deceived.

It was therefore with this perfect knowledge of the character of his friends, with this profound acquaintance with their virtues and their vices, that, separated from them, isolated, sad, in this gloomy chamber, he thought of them, of himself, of his life, and saw, as through a mist, those funereal horizons which already outlined the future to eyes less clear-sighted than his own.

This affair of Salcede had greatly annoyed him. Alone between two women at such a moment, Henry had felt his loneliness; Louise's weakness grieved him, Catharine's strength terrified him. Henry, in fact, felt in himself that vague and eternal terror which accompanies kings chosen by fate to be the last of their race.

To perceive, in fact, that although elevated above all men, this grandeur has no solid basis; to feel one's self the statue to which incense is offered, the idol that is adorned, but that the priest and the people, the worshippers and the ministers, bow down or rise according to their interest, oscillate according to their caprice, is to a proud spirit the most cruel of disgraces. Henry felt it severely, and it irritated him to feel it.

And yet, at times, he was seized with the energy of his youth, extinguished in him long before this youth had expired.

"After all," he said to himself, "why should I be uneasy? I have no further wars to fight; Guise is at Nancy, Henri at Pau; the one is obliged to keep his ambition to himself, the other never had any. The minds of the people are quieted, no Frenchman has seriously thought of this impossible enterprise of dethroning his king; this third crown, promised by the golden scissors of Madame de Montpensier, is nothing but the idle talk of a woman wounded in her pride and vanity; my mother alone still dreams of her phantom of usurpation, without being able to point out the usurper. But I, who am a man, I, who have still a young head, notwithstanding my sorrows, know how to contend against the pretenders she fears.

"I will make Henry of Navarre ridiculous, Guise odious; and, sword in hand, I will break the foreign leagues. *Par la mordieu!* I am as good now as I was at Jarnac and at Moncontour!

"Yes," continued Henry, letting his head fall on his bosom; "yes, but in the meantime, I am lonely, and 'tis mortal to be lonely. Ah! there is my real, my only conspirator, *ennui!* and my mother never speaks to me of that one.

"Let us see if any comes to me to-night; Joyeuse had promised to be here early; he is one who amuses himself, but how the devil does he contrive to amuse himself? D'Epernon? ah! he does not amuse himself; he sulks; he has not yet been paid his pension of twenty-five thousand crowns on the cloven feet; well, let him sulk quite at his ease."

"Sire," said the voice of the usher, "M. le Duc d'Epernon."

Those who know the weariness of waiting, the accusations it suggests against the individuals expected, the facility with which the cloud is dissipated when the per-

son appears, will understand the eagerness with which the king ordered a chair to be placed for the duke.

"Ah! good evening, duke," he said, "I am delighted to see you."

D'Epernon bowed respectfully.

"Why were you not present at the execution of that rogue of a Spaniard? I told you there would be room at my window."

"Sire, I was unable to avail myself of your majesty's kindness."

"You were prevented?"

"Yes, sire. I had business."

"One would really think that you were my minister, coming with a long face to announce that some subsidy had not been paid," said Henry, shrugging his shoulders.

"Faith," said D'Epernon, catching the ball at its bound, "your majesty is right, the subsidy has not been paid, and I am without a crown."

"Good," said Henry, impatient.

"But," continued D'Epernon, "no matter about that, I do not wish your majesty to think I was only occupied with my affairs."

"Let us hear the business, duke."

"Your majesty knows what took place at the execution of Salcede."

"*Parbleu!* since I was there?"

"They attempted to carry off the criminal."

"I did not see that."

"It is the rumor all through the city, however."

"A rumor without cause and without result; they did not stir."

"I think your majesty is in error."

"On what do you found your belief?"

"On the fact that Salcede denied before the people what he had confessed before the judges."

"Ah! you already know that?"

"I endeavor to know all that interests your majesty."

"Thank you, but what are you coming to with this discussion."

"To this, a man who dies like Salcedo, dies like a faithful servant, sire."

"Well! what then?"

"The master who has such servants is very lucky; that's all."

"And you mean that I have none such, or rather, that I have them no longer? You are right, if that is your meaning."

"That is not my meaning. Your majesty will find, when you need them, and I can answer for it better than any one, servants as faithful as the master of Salcedo found him."

"The master of Salcedo, the master of Salcedo! call things for once, then, by their proper names. Who is this master?"

"Your majesty should know better than I; you attend to politics."

"I know what I know. Tell me what you know."

"I know nothing; but I suspect many things."

"Good," said Henry annoyed. "You come here to frighten me and tell me disagreeable things, do you not? Thank you, duke, I recognize you well in that."

"Now your majesty is unjust to me," said D'Epernon.

"It is very just, I think."

"No, sire, a devoted man may give a warning that proves to have been erroneous; but none the less the man does his duty in giving the warning."

"These are my affairs."

"Ah! since your majesty thinks so, you are right, sire; let us say no more about it."

A silence ensued which the king at length interrupted.

"Come," said he, "do not oppress me, duke; I am already as gloomy as an Egyptian Pharaoh in his pyramid. Enliven me."

"Ah! sire, we cannot command joy."

The king struck the table angrily with his fist.

"You are a bad friend, duke!" he exclaimed. "Alas, alas! I did not think I had lost so much in losing my old friends."

"May I make bold to remark to your majesty that you hardly encourage the new ones?"

Here the king made a fresh pause, during which, for his only reply, he looked at this man, who owed everything to him, with an expression which the latter well understood.

"Your majesty reproaches me with your benefits," he said, in the tone of a finished Gascon. "I do not reproach you with my devotion."

And the duke, who had not yet seated himself, took the chair which the king had ordered for him.

"Lavalette, Lavalette," said Henry, sadly, "you break my heart; you who have such spirits, and could so easily make me joyful. God is my witness that I have not heard of Quelus, so brave, Schomberg, so kind, Maugiron, so delicate, respecting my honor. No. At that time there was even Bussy; Bussy, who was not mine, if you will, but whom I should have acquired, had I not feared to give umbrage to others; Bussy, who was the involuntary cause of their death. Alas! what have I come to, that I regret even my enemies? Certainly all four were brave men. Eh, *mon Dieu!* be not angry at what I say! it is not your nature to fight continually like my old favorites, but you are clever and amusing, and sometimes of good counsel. You know all my affairs, like that other more humble friend, with whom I never had a single moment of *ennui*."

"Of whom would your majesty speak?" said the duke.

"You ought to resemble him, D'Epernon."

"I must first know whom your majesty regrets."

"Oh! poor Chicot, where are you?"

D'Epernon rose quite piqued.

"Well! what are you doing?" said the king.

"Your majesty's reminiscences to-day are not very amusing for other people," said he.

"And why so?"

"Because your majesty, without intending it perhaps, compared me to Chicot, and I feel myself but little flattered by the comparison."

"You are wrong, D'Epernon. I could only compare Chicot to a man whom I love and who loves me. He was a faithful and intelligent servant."

And Henry heaved a deep sigh.

"It was not to make me resemble Chicot, I presume, that your majesty made me a duke and peer?" said D'Epernon.

"Come, let us not recriminate," said the king, with a malicious smile; the Gascon (crafty and impudent as he was) felt himself more ill at ease before this mild sarcasm, than he would have been under an open reproach.

"Chicot loved me," said the king, "and I miss him; that's all I mean. Ah! when I think that in the same place in which you now are, have been all these young men, handsome, brave, and faithful; that yonder on that very chair on which you have placed your hat, Chicot has slept more than a hundred times."

"He may have been very witty," interrupted D'Epernon, "but at all events he was but little respectful."

"Alas!" continued Henry, "this dear friend of mine has now neither mind nor body."

And he sorrowfully agitated his chaplet of death's heads, which produced a mournful clicking, as if made by real bones.

"Eh! what became of your Chicot, then?" carelessly demanded D'Epernon.

"He is dead!" replied Henry; "dead, like all who have loved me."

"Well, sire," resumed the duke, "I really think he did well to die; he was getting old, much less so, however, than his jokes, and I have heard that sobriety was not

his favorite virtue. Of what did the poor devil die, sire—indigestion?”

“Chicot died of grief, unfeeling man,” sharply replied the king.

“He must have said so, to make you laugh once more.”

“You are wrong; he would not even sadden me with the news of his illness; he knew how I regretted my friends, he who had so often seen me weep for them.”

“Then it is his spirit that returned?”

“Would to God I could see him again, even as a spirit. No, it was his friend, the worthy Prior Gorenflot, who wrote me this sad news.”

“Gorenflot, who is he?”

“A holy man, whom I made prior of the Jacobins, and who inhabits that pretty convent outside the Porte Saint Antoine, opposite the Croix Faubin, near Bel-Esbat.”

“Oh! some bad preacher to whom your majesty has given a priory of thirty thousand livres, with which you take care not to reproach him.”

“Are you getting impious at present?”

“If that would enliven your majesty, I would attempt.”

“Will you be silent, duke; you offend God!”

“Chicot, however, was very impious, and it seems to me he was forgiven.”

“Chicot came at a time when I could yet laugh at something.”

“Then your majesty is wrong to regret him.”

“Why so?”

“If your majesty can no longer laugh at anything, Chicot, gay as he was, would not be of much service.”

“The man was good at anything, and it is not simply on account of his wit that I regret him.”

“And from what cause then? not for his face, I presume, for Maître Chicot was very ugly.”

“He gave prudent advice.”

“Come, I see that if he were alive, your majesty would

make him Chancellor, as you made a prior of this monk."

"Come, do not laugh, duke, I beg, at those who loved me and whom I loved. Chicot, now that he is dead, is as sacred to me as a serious friend, and when I am not in the mood for laughing, I expect no one to laugh."

"Oh! sire. I have no more wish to laugh than your majesty. What I said was, that, just now, you regretted Chicot for his good-humor, that just now you reproached me with want of gayety, while now you desire me to sadden you—*parfondious!* Oh! pardon me, sire, this cursed oath always escapes me."

"Well, well, now I am cooled down. Now I am in the mood in which you wanted to find me when you began the conversation with your sinister hints. Tell me, then, your bad news, D'Epernon; the king has always the strength of a man."

"I do not doubt it, sire."

"And it is lucky, for badly guarded as I am, if I did not guard myself, I should be dead a dozen times a day."

"Which would not displease certain people whom I know."

"Against those, duke, I have the halberds of my Swiss."

"They are very powerless to reach far."

"Against those who must be reached from a distance, I have the muskets of my soldiers."

"They are unwieldy to strike close; to defend a royal breast, honest breasts are worth more than halberds and muskets."

"Alas!" said Henry, "I had them once, and in these breasts, noble hearts! never did anything happen to me in the time of those living ramparts who were called Quelus, Schomberg, Saint Luc, Maugiron, and Saint Megrin."

"Is this what your majesty regrets?" said D'Epernon, intending to get his revenge by taking the king in *flagrante delicto* of egotism.

"I regret above all things the hearts that beat in these bosoms," said Henry.

"Sire," said D'Epernon, "if I dared, I would tell your majesty that I am a Gascon; that means far-seeing and industrious; that I endeavor to supply by wit the virtues denied me by nature, in a word, that I do all I can, that is, all that I ought, and in consequence, I have the right to say, 'Come what may.'"

"Ah! that is how you get out of it; you come and make before me a grand display of dangers, true or false, and when you have contrived to frighten me, you sum up in these words, 'Come what may'; very much obliged, duke."

"Does your majesty believe a little in these dangers?"

"Yes. I will believe them, if you prove to me that you can oppose them."

"I think I can."

"You can?"

"Yes, sire."

"I know very well you have your resources, your little ways, fox that you are."

"Not so little."

"Let us know them, then."

"Will your majesty consent to rise?"

"What for?"

"To accompany me to the old buildings of the Louvre."

"Near the street of L'Astruce?"

"Precisely, to the spot where they were building a store-room; a project which was abandoned when your majesty would have no other furniture than *prie-dieux* and chaplets of death's heads."

"At this hour?"

"Ten o'clock is striking at the Louvre; it is not so very late, I think."

"What shall I see in these buildings?"

"Ah! if I tell you, you will not want to come?"

"It is very far, duke."

"We can go in five minutes through the galleries."

"D'Epernon, D'Epernon."

"Well, sire."

"If what you are about to show me is not very curious, take care."

"I will answer for it, sire, it shall be curious."

"Come, then," said the king, rising with an effort.

The duke took his cloak and presented his sword to the king; then taking a torch he preceded, in the gallery, his Most Christian Majesty, who followed him with a wearied step.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DORMITORY.

ALTHOUGH it was not yet ten o'clock, as D'Epernon had said, a death-like silence reigned throughout the Louvre; scarcely, above the loud whistling of the wind, could they hear the regular steps of the sentinels and the groaning of the draw-bridges.

In less than five minutes the two explorers reached the buildings of the Rue de l'Astruce, which had preserved its name ever since the erection of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois.

The duke drew a key from his bag, descended a few steps, crossed a small court, opened an arched door, almost hidden by yellow reeds, and the lower part of which was still overgrown with long grass.

For some time they went along a dark corridor, at the end of which they found themselves in an interior court, at one of the angles of which was a stone staircase.

This staircase led to a vast chamber, or rather an immense corridor.

D'Epernon also had the key of this corridor.

He gently opened the door, and made Henry observe

the singular arrangement which immediately struck the eye when the door was opened.

It was furnished with forty-five beds, and each bed occupied by a sleeper. The king looked at the beds—looked at the sleepers—and turning towards the duke with an anxious curiosity,

“Well!” he said, “who are all these men asleep?”

“Men who sleep to-night, but who will not sleep to-morrow, except by turns.”

“And why will they not sleep?”

“That your majesty may sleep.”

“Explain yourself; are all these men your friends?”

“Chosen by myself, sire, tried like winnowed grain; intrepid guards, who will not quit your majesty, nor even your shadow, and who, gentlemen all, will have the right to go wherever your majesty may go, and will allow no one to approach within sword’s length of your majesty.”

“And you invented this, D’Epernon?”

“Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes; I alone, sire.”

“We shall be laughed at.”

“No; we shall be feared.”

“Your gentlemen, then, are very terrible.”

“Sire, they are a pack of hounds, who will dash at any game you please; and who, knowing none but you, having no intercourse save with your majesty, will look to none but yourself for light, life, and warmth.”

“But this will ruin me.”

“Is a king ever ruined?”

“I cannot pay the Swiss.”

“Look at these men, sire. Do you think they would be very expensive to keep.”

The king looked at the long dormitory, which presented a sight quite worthy of attention, even to a king accustomed to handsome architectural divisions.

The hall was divided down its whole length by a partition, on which the builder had built forty-five alcoves, placed like so many chapels, side by side, and leading into

the passage, at one of the extremities of which were the king and D'Epernon.

A door, in each of the alcoves, led to a sort of inner room. The result of this was that every gentleman had his public room and his private retirement.

In public, he appeared in the alcove, *en famille*, he retired to his little lodge.

The door of each of these small lodges opened on a balcony running the whole length of the building.

The king could not at first comprehend these minute distinctions.

"Why have you shown them to me asleep in their beds?" inquired the king.

"Because, sire, I thought the inspection would thus be easier to your majesty. Besides, these alcoves, which have each a number, have an advantage—that of transmitting the number to the occupant. Thus, each of the tenants will be, when necessary, a man or a number."

"It is very well imagined," said the king, "especially if we alone hold the key of this arithmetic. But the poor fellows will be stifled, always living in this den."

"Your majesty can go the rounds with me, if you wish it, and enter the apartment of each."

"*Tudieu!* what a store-room you have made for me, D'Epernon!" said the king, casting his eyes on the chairs loaded with the clothes of the sleepers. "If I put up these fellows' clothes in them, Paris will laugh loud enough."

"It is a fact, sire," replied the duke, "that my forty-five are not very sumptuously attired; but had they all been dukes and peers——"

"Yes; I understand," said the king, smiling; "they would have cost me more."

"Exactly, sire."

"How much will they cost? Come, that will decide me, perhaps, for in truth, D'Epernon, the appearance is not very relishing."

"Sire, I know they are rather thin and burnt by our southern sun, but I was thin and brown myself when I came to Paris. They will grow fat and fair like me."

"Hem!" said Henry, casting a side look at D'Epernon. And after a pause:

"Do you know that your gentlemen snore like choristers?" said the king.

"Sire, you must not judge them to-night; they have dined well, you see."

"Stay, there is one talking in his sleep," said the king, listening with curiosity.

"Really?"

"Yes; what does he say? Listen!"

In fact, one of the gentlemen, his head and arms hanging over the bed, his mouth half open, breathed a few words with a melancholy smile. The king gently approached him.

"If you are a woman," he said, "fly, fly!"

"Ah, ah!" said Henry, "he is a gallant youth."

"What do you think of him, sire?"

"His face pleases me."

D'Epernon brought his flambeau to the alcove.

"He has white hands and a well kept beard."

"It is Ernauton de Carmainges, a fine fellow who will make his way."

"He has left behind him some rustic love, poor devil."

"To have none other than his king, sire. We will reward him for his sacrifice."

"Oh, oh! here is a queer figure next to your friend. How did you call him?"

"Ernauton de Carmainges."

"Oh, yes. *Peste!* what a shirt number three has; it looks like a penitent's sack."

"That one is M. de Chalabre; if he ruins your majesty, it will not be without enriching himself a little, I answer for it."

"And that other gloomy face; he does not look as though he dreamed of love."

"What number, sire?"

"Number twelve."

"M. de Maline, sire, a brave fellow with a heart of bronze."

"Now that I think of it, do you know that this was quite an idea, Lavalette?"

"I should think so; imagine for a moment, sire, the effect produced by these new watch-dogs who will follow your majesty as the shadow follows the body,—these Cerberuses who have never been seen before and who, on the first occasion, will show themselves in a fashion that will do honor to us all."

"Yes, yes, you are right; it is an idea. But listen."

"To what?"

"They cannot follow me like my shadow in that garb, I presume. My body is of good style and I will not have it disgraced by its shadow, or rather its shadows."

"Oh! we return sire, to the question of expenses?"

"Do you think of eluding it!"

"No, on the contrary, it is the fundamental question in everything; but about this also I have had an idea."

"D'Epernon, D'Epernon!" said the king.

"My zeal for your majesty doubles my imagination."

"Come, let us have this idea."

"If it depended upon me, each of these gentlemen should find, to-morrow morning, on the stool that holds his rags, a purse of a thousand crowns, for the payment of the first half-year."

"A thousand crowns for the first half-year, six thousand livres a year! Why, you are mad, duke, a whole regiment would not cost as much."

"You forget, sire, that they are destined to be your majesty's shadows, and, you have said yourself that you wish your shadows to be decently clad. Each will have to take

from the thousand crowns enough for arms and equipments. Set down fifteen hundred livres to effect this in a manner to do you honor; that would make it forty-five hundred livres for the first year, three thousand for the second, and so on."

"That is more reasonable."

"And your majesty accepts?"

"There is but one difficulty, duke."

"Which?"

"The want of money."

"The want of money?"

"Well! you ought to know better than any one that the reason I give you is not a bad one, as you have not yet been able to get your remittance paid."

"Sire, I have found the means."

"Of getting money for me?"

"For your guard, sire."

"What niggardly scheme now?" thought the king, looking askance at D'Epernon. Then, aloud: "Let us hear the means," he said.

"This day six months ago, a tax was levied on shooting and fishing."

"Well?"

"The payment of the first half-year yielded sixty-five thousand crowns, which have not yet been turned into the treasury and await your majesty's disposal."

"I destined it for the war, duke."

"Well! exactly, sire. The first condition of war is to have men: the first interest of the kingdom is the safety and defence of the king; by securing the safety of the king, we fulfil all these conditions."

"The argument is not bad; but, according to your account, I see but forty-five thousand crowns used, and I shall therefore have twenty thousand left for my regiments."

"Pardon, sire; I have disposed, with your majesty's permission, of these twenty thousand crowns."

"Oh! you have disposed of them?"

"Yes, sire, you had promised me money."

"I was sure of it," said the king; "you give me a guard to obtain your money."

"Oh! sire!"

"But why this exact number of forty-five?" demanded the king, passing to a new idea.

"I will explain it, sire. The number three is primordial and divine, moreover it is convenient. For instance, when a cavalier has three horses, he is never reduced to going on foot; when the first is weary the second is at hand, and the third replaces the second in case of wounds or disease. You will always have three times fifteen gentlemen; fifteen for service—thirty who rest. Each day's service will last twelve hours, and during these twelve hours, you will always have five on the right hand, five on the left, two before, and three behind. Let any one attack you with such a guard as that."

"*Par la mordieu!* it is a skilful combination, duke; I congratulate you."

"Look at them, sire; really they will produce a very good effect."

"Yes, dressed they will not be bad."

"Do you not think that I now have the right to speak of the dangers that threaten you, sire?"

"I do not deny it."

"You approve of me?"

"Yes."

"M. de Joyeuse would not have had such an idea!"

"D'Epernon! D'Epernon! it is not charitable to speak ill of the absent."

"*Parfandious!* you speak so ill of those present, sire."

"Ah! Joyeuse accompanies me everywhere. He was with me at the Grève to-day."

"Well! I was here, sire, and your majesty sees I did not waste my time."

"Thank you, Lavalette."

"Apropos, sire," said D'Epernon, after a momentary silence, "I have a favor to ask."

"I should be astonished if you had not."

"Your majesty is bitter to-day."

"Eh! no, you misunderstand me, my friend," said the king, whose raillery was satisfied with its revenge: "I only mean, that having rendered me a service, you have the right to ask for a return."

"That makes a difference, sire. Besides, what I solicit of your majesty is an appointment."

"An appointment? You, colonel-general of infantry, you wish for more? It would crush you."

"In your majesty's service I am a Samson; I could carry heaven and earth."

"Make your demand, then," said the king, sighing.

"I desire your majesty to give me the command of these forty-five gentlemen."

"What!" said the king, stupefied. "You will walk before me, behind me? you will devote yourself to this point? you will be captain of the guards?"

"No, sire, no!"

"Well! what is it, then! speak."

"I wish these guards to understand my command better than that of any other; but I shall neither precede them nor follow them, I shall have a second myself."

"There is something at the bottom of this," thought Henry, shaking his head. "This devil of a man always gives that he may receive." Then aloud: "Well; so be it, you shall have your command."

"Secret?"

"Yes, but who will then officiate at the head of my forty-five guardsmen?"

"M. de Loignac."

"Ah! so much the better."

"He pleases your majesty?"

"Perfectly."

"Then it is decided?"

"Yes, but——"

"But?"

"What part does this Loignac take under you?"

"He is my D'Epernon, sire."

"He will cost you dear, then," grumbled the king.

"Your majesty says——"

"I say that I accept."

"Sire, I will go at once to the treasurer for the forty-five purses."

"To-night?"

"Must not our men find them to-morrow morning when they wake?"

"Very just. Go; I will return."

"Content, sire?"

"Tolerably."

"Well guarded at all events."

"Yes: by men who sleep."

"They will keep watch to-morrow, sire."

D'Epernon conducted Henry to the door of the corridor, and left him, saying to himself:

"If I am not a king, I have guards like a king, and they cost me nothing—*parfondious!*"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SHADE OF CHICOT.

WE have said that the king was never for a moment deceived as to the character of his friends. He knew their faults and their vices, and appeared to have as deep an insight into the human heart as was permitted to any earthly sovereign.

He understood at once that D'Epernon was working for his own advantage, but as he had expected to be

obliged to give without receiving anything in return, whereas, on the contrary, he received forty-five body-guards in exchange for sixty-five thousand crowns, the Gascon's idea pleased him.

Besides, it was a novelty. A poor King of France is not always overstocked with this merchandise, so rare even for subjects,—King Henry the Third, especially, who, when he had gone through his processions, combed his dogs, strung his death's heads, and heaved his usual number of sighs, had nothing left to do.

The guard instituted by D'Epernon pleased the king, more especially as it would be talked about, and he would be enabled, in consequence, to read on the faces around him something more than he had seen there in the ten years elapsed since his return from Poland.

As he gradually approached his room, in which the usher, puzzled by this strange nocturnal excursion, was waiting for him, Henry developed to himself the advantages of this institution, and, like all weak or enfeebled minds, he saw, more clearly, the ideas which D'Epernon had brought to light in the conversation he had just had with him.

"*Au fait!*" thought the king, "these gentlemen will no doubt be very brave, and perhaps very devoted. Some of their faces are prepossessing, others repulsive; there are, thank God! some of all sorts, and besides, forty-five swords always ready to leap from their scabbards, are a great thing."

The last link in the chain of his thoughts brought before his mind the remembrance of those other devoted swords, which he so bitterly regretted aloud, and still more bitterly when alone; and Henry sank again into that deep melancholy into which, at this period, he fell so often that it might be called his habitual condition.

The time so inauspicious, men so wicked, crowns so loosened on the brows of kings, impressed him again with that ardent wish of dying or enlivening himself, to escape



WILLIAM III., PRINCE OF ORANGE.

for a moment from that disease which the English—our superiors in melancholy—had already baptized by the name of spleen.

He looked round for Joyeuse, and seeing him nowhere, inquired for him.

"M. the Duke has not yet returned," said the usher.

"Oh, very well; call my valets, and retire."

"Sire, your majesty's room is ready, and her majesty the queen has sent to ask your wishes."

Henry pretended not to hear.

"Must I say to her majesty that she may place the pillow?" hazarded the usher.

"No," said Henry, "I have my devotions, I have some work, and besides, I am suffering; I will sleep alone."

The usher bowed.

"By the way," said Henry, calling him; "carry these Eastern preserves to the queen; they produce sleep."

And he handed his box to the usher.

The king entered his room, which his valets had prepared; once there, Henry glanced at all the accessories, elaborate and minute, of those extravagant toilettes by the aid of which he had striven to be the handsomest man of Christendom, being unable to be the greatest king.

But nothing now spoke in favor of this enforced labor, to which at one time he so bravely subjected himself: all that he once had of the woman in his hermaphrodite organization had disappeared. Henry was like one of those old coquettes, who have exchanged their mirror for the prayer-book; he almost abhorred the objects which he had most cherished.

Perfumed and unctuous gloves, masks of fine linen impregnated with paste, chemical compounds to curl the hair, blacken the beard, redden the ears, and make the eyes sparkle; he neglected all these as he had done for some time past.

"My bed!" said he, with a sigh.

Two servants undressed him, drew on him a pair of

drawers of fine Friesland wool, and raising him carefully, they placed him between the sheets.

"His majesty's reader," cried a voice.

Henry, subject to long and cruel insomnia, had himself sometimes read to sleep, and now a reading in the Polish tongue was needed to accomplish this miracle, whilst, formerly, the French was sufficient.

"No, no one," said Henry, "no reader, or let him read prayers, to himself, for my good; but if M. de Joyeuse return, bring him to me."

"But if he return late, sire?"

"Alas!" said Henry, "he always comes late; but whatever may be the hour, you hear, I wish to see him."

The domestics extinguished the wax candles, lighted near the fire a scented lamp, which produced a pale and bluish flame, a sort of phantasmagoric amusement of which the king seemed very fond since the return of his sepulchral ideas; they then left his silent chamber as softly as possible.

Henry, brave in the face of a real danger, had all the fears, all the weaknesses of children and of women. He was frightened at apparitions, he feared spirits, and yet this feeling amused him; being afraid, he was less bored. In this he was like the prisoner, who, wearied of the idleness of a long captivity, replied to those who announced to him that he was about to undergo the torture:

"Good, I shall be able to pass away a moment."

However, while still following the shadows made by his lamp against the walls, while still piercing with his eye the most obscure corners of his chamber, while still endeavoring to catch the slightest murmur, which might have denounced the mysterious entrance of a spirit, Henry's eyes, wearied by the spectacle of the morning, and the walk of the evening, or rather night, closed themselves, and he soon slept, or rather stupefied himself in this quiet and solitude.

But Henry's repose did not continue long; undermined

by that slow fever which consumed his life, during his sleep as well as during his waking hours, he fancied he heard a noise in his chamber, and awoke.

"Joyeuse," he said, "is it you?"

No one replied.

The blue flame of the lamp was getting dim, it now only described on the ceiling of sculptured oak a palish circle, which turned to a greenish hue the gold of the cornices.

"Alone, still alone," murmured the king; "ah! the prophet is right. Majesty should always sigh; he would have done better to have said: It always sighs." And after a moment's pause: "O God!" he muttered in the form of a prayer, "give me the strength to be always alone during my life, alone as I shall be after death!"

"Eh! eh! alone after your death? That is not certain," replied a harsh voice, that vibrated with a metallic ring a few steps from the bed; "and the worms; how about the worms?"

The king started up and looked around him in terror.

"Oh! I know that voice," he murmured.

"That is fortunate," said the voice.

A cold perspiration stood on the king's forehead.

"It sounds like the voice of Chicot," he sighed.

"You burn, Henry, you burn," replied the voice.

Henry, throwing his leg out of bed, now perceived at some distance from the chimney, in the same arm-chair he had but an hour before pointed out to D'Epernon, a head, dimly outlined by a fitful flame, resembling one of the figures in Rembrandt's pictures, scarcely to be distinguished at a first glance.

This reflection descended upon the arms of the chair, upon which were resting the elbows of the occupant, then upon his swelling and bony knee, then upon an instep forming a right angle with a leg, nervous, thin, and lengthy beyond measure.

"May God protect me!" exclaimed Henry; "it is Chicot's spirit!"

"Ah! my poor Henriquet," said the voice, "you are still so foolish?"

"What does that mean?"

"Spirits do not speak, imbecile, since they have no body, and consequently no tongue," replied the figure seated in the chair.

"You are really Chicot, then," exclaimed the king, mad with joy.

"I can decide nothing on that point; we shall see what I am by-and-by, we shall see."

"Then, you are not dead, my poor Chicot?"

"Here you are screaming like an eagle. Yes, on the contrary, I am dead, a hundred times dead."

"Chicot, my only friend!"

"You at least are not changed, you always say the same thing."

"But you, you," said the king, sorrowfully, "are you changed, Chicot?"

"I hope so, really.

"Chicot, my friend," said the king putting his two feet on the floor, "why did you leave me? Tell me."

"Because I died."

"But you said just now that you were not dead."

"And I repeat it."

"What means this contradiction?"

"This contradiction means, Henry, that I am dead to some, and alive to others."

"And for me, which are you?"

"For you I am dead."

"Why dead to me?"

"It is easy to comprehend. Listen."

"Yes."

"You are not the master in your own house."

"What do you mean?"

"You can do nothing for those who serve you."

"Monsieur Chicot!"

"Don't let us quarrel, or I shall get angry."

"Yes, you are right," said the king, trembling lest the spirit of Chicot should vanish; "speak, my friend, speak."

"Well, then, I had a little affair to settle with M. de Mayenne, you remember?"

"Perfectly."

"I settled it well. I beat this valiant captain unmercifully. He sought for me to hang me; and you, upon whom I relied to defend me, against this hero, instead of supporting me, you abandoned me; instead of finishing him up, you became reconciled with him. What did I then do? I declared myself dead and buried, by the aid of my friend Gorenflot, so that, since then, M. de Mayenne, who sought me, seeks me no longer."

"What a frightful courage you showed, Chicot; did you not know the grief your death would cause me? Tell me."

"Yes, it is courageous but not at all frightful. I have never lived so tranquilly as I have since every one supposed me dead."

"Chicot! Chicot! my friend," exclaimed the king; "you frighten me, my senses are going."

"Ah, bah! is it only to-day you have found that out?"

"I know not what to believe."

"Well, we must, however, determine upon something; what do you believe? let me hear."

"Well! I believe you have died and returned again."

"Then I lie? You are polite."

"You conceal from me a part of the truth, at least, but presently, like the spectres of old you will tell me some terrible things."

"Ah! as to that, I do not deny it. Prepare yourself, poor king."

"Yes, yes," continued Henry, "confess that you are a spirit raised by the Almighty."

"I will confess whatever you like."

"If you are not a spirit, how could you come unnoticed through the guarded corridors? how did you get here, in my chamber, close to me? can any one enter the Louvre, now? This is the way in which the king is guarded!"

And Henry, abandoning himself entirely to the imaginary terror that had seized him, threw himself again on the bed, ready to cover his head with the sheets.

"There! there! there!" said Chicot, with an accent in which there was some pity and much sympathy, "there! don't excite yourself, you have but to touch me, to be convinced."

"You are not a messenger of vengeance?"

"*Ventre de biche!* have I horns like Satan, or a flaming sword like the Archangel Michael?"

"But how did you come?"

"You return to the subject?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Well! understand that I have still my key, the one you gave me, and which I hung round my neck to enrage the gentlemen of your chamber, who have only the right to hang it behind. Well! with this key I entered, and here I am."

"By the secret door, then?"

"Certainly."

"But why did you enter to-day, rather than yesterday?"

"Ah! it is true, there's the question. Well! you shall know it."

Henry let his sheets drop, and with the simplicity of an infant:

"Tell me nothing disagreeable, Chicot," he said, "I entreat you; oh! if you knew what pleasure the sound of your voice gives me!"

"As for me, I shall tell you the truth. If the truth is disagreeable, so much the worse."

"But your fear of M. de Mayenne is not serious?" said the king.

"Very serious, on the contrary. You understand, M. de Mayenne had given me fifty blows with a stick ; in return for which I gave him one hundred with the sheath of my sword. Suppose two blows with the sheath equal to one blow with a stick, and we are neck and neck. Beware of revenge ! Suppose one blow of a sheath to be equal to one blow of a stick, which may be the opinion of M. de Mayenne, in that case he still owes me fifty blows with a stick or a sword sheath ; but I fear nothing so much as debtors of this sort, and I would not have come here, however great your need of me, had I not known that M. de Mayenne was at Soissons."

"Well, Chicot, this being the case, since it is on my account that you have returned, I take you under my protection, and I wish——"

"What do you wish ? take care, Henriquet ; every time you pronounce the words 'I wish,' you are ready to say some foolish thing."

"I wish you would be resuscitated and appear openly."

"There, I said so."

"I will defend you."

"Good !"

"Chicot, I pledge my royal word to you."

"Bah ! I have better than that."

"What have you ?"

"I have my hole, and I shall remain there."

"I will defend you, I said," exclaimed the king, earnestly, jumping out of bed.

"Henry !" said Chicot, "you will take cold, go back to bed again, I pray."

"You are right, but you exasperate me," said the king, getting between the sheets. "How ! when I, Henri de Valois, King of France, have enough Swiss, Scotch, French guards, and gentlemen for my defence, M. Chicot is not contented, and in safety !"

"Well, listen. How did you say ? you have the Swiss ?"

"Yes, commanded by Tocquenot."

"Good. You have the Scotch?"

"Yes, commanded by Larchant."

"Very well; you have the French guards?"

"Commanded by Crillon."

"Wonderful, and what next?"

"What next? I do not know if I ought to tell you this."

"Do not tell it, then: who asks you?"

"And next, a novelty, Chicot."

"A novelty?"

"Yes, imagine forty-five brave gentlemen."

"Forty-five! what do you mean?"

"Forty-five gentlemen."

"Where did you find them? Not in Paris, at any rate!"

"No, but they arrived here yesterday."

"Oh!" said Chicot, with a sudden illumination; "I know your gentlemen."

"Really!"

"Forty-five beggars, who only want the wallet."

"I do not say so."

"Figures to make one die with laughter."

"Chicot, there are some superb men among them."

"Gascons, in fact, like the colonel-general of your infantry."

"And like you, Chicot."

"Oh! with me, Henry, it is very different. I am no longer a Gascon, since I left Gascony."

"While they?"

"Are quite the contrary, they were not Gascons in Gascony, and here they are double Gascons."

"Never mind, I have forty-five formidable swords."

"Commanded by that forty-sixth formidable sword whom they call D'Epernon."

"Not precisely."

"By whom, then?"

"By Loignac."

"*Peuh!*"

"Don't depreciate Loignac at present."

"I will take good care not to do that; we are cousins in the twenty-seventh degree."

"You Gascons are all related."

"Quite the contrary to you Valois, who are never so."

"Well, will you reply?"

"To what?"

"My forty-five?"

"And it is with them you think to defend yourself?"

"Yes, *mordieu!* yes," exclaimed Henry, irritated.

Chicot, or his spirit—for, not being better informed on this point than the king, we are obliged to leave our readers in doubt—Chicot, we say, had glided into the arm-chair, at the same time resting his heels on the rim of the same chair, so that his knees formed the summit of an angle higher than his head.

"Well!" he said, "I have more troops than you."

"Troops! you have troops?"

"And why not?"

"And what troops?"

"You shall see. In the first place, I have the whole army that Messieurs de Guise are forming in Lorraine."

"Are you mad?"

"No, a real army, six thousand men at least."

"But how can you, who have so great a dread of M. de Mayenne, be defended by the soldiers of M. de Guise?"

"Because I am dead."

"Again this jest."

"But it was with Chicot that M. de Mayenne fell out. I have therefore profited by this death to change my body, my name, and my social position."

"Then you are no longer Chicot?" said the king.

"No."

"Who are you, then?"

"I am Robert Briquet, former merchant and Leaguer."

"You, a Leaguer, Chicot?"

"A devoted one who acts, look you, on condition of not coming too near M. de Mayenne. I have for my personal defense, I, Briquet, member of the holy Union, first, the army of the Lorraines, six thousand men, remember that number."

"I do."

"Then about one hundred thousand Parisians."

"Famous soldiers!"

"Famous enough to give you some trouble, my prince. Well, six thousand and one hundred thousand are one hundred and six thousand. Next, the Parliament, the Pope, the Spaniards, M. le Cardinal de Bourbon, the Flemish, Henry of Navarre, the Duke of Anjou."

"Are you beginning to exhaust their list?" said Henry, impatient.

"Why no, there still remain three classes of people."

"Mention them."

"Who are much against you."

"Mention them."

"First, the Catholics."

"Ah! yes, because I have only exterminated three quarters of the Huguenots."

"Then the Huguenots, because you have exterminated three quarters of them."

"Oh! yes; and the third sort?"

"What will you say to the politicians, Henry?"

"Ah! those who will have neither me nor my brother, nor M. de Guise."

"But who will readily accept your brother-in-law of Navarre."

"Provided he would abjure."

"What of that! Do you think he would be embarrassed?"

"But the men of whom you speak——"

"Well?"

"Are the whole of France."

"Exactly. There are my troops,—the troops of a Leaguer. Come, come, sum up and compare."

"We are jesting, are we not, Chicot?" said Henry, feeling certain shudders running through his veins.

"A pretty hour to jest, when you are alone against all the world, my poor Henriquet."

Henry assumed an air of royal dignity.

"Alone I am," he said; "but alone, I will also command. You show me an army, very well: now show me the chief. Oh! you will point to M. de Guise; do I not keep him at Nancy? M. de Mayenne, you admit yourself, is at Soissons, the Duke of Anjou is at Brussels, the King of Navarre is at Pau; while I am alone, it is true, but free where I am. I am like a hunter in the midst of a plain waiting to see his prey come within his reach."

Chicot scratched his nose. The king thought he was convinced.

"What have you to reply to this?" said Henry.

"That you are always eloquent, Henry, your tongue remains your own; in truth it is more than I expected, and I offer you my sincere congratulations. I shall attack but one part of your discourse."

"Which?"

"Oh! nothing, almost nothing, a figure of rhetoric; I shall attack your comparison."

"In what respect?"

"You pretend you are the hunter lying in wait for the game, while I, on the contrary, maintain that you are the game whom the hunter tracks to his lair."

"Chicot!"

"Well, man lying in wait, whom have you seen approach?"

"No one, *pardieu!*"

"But some one has approached."

"Among those I mentioned?"

"Not precisely, but nearly so."

"Who is come?"

"A woman."

"My sister Margot?"

"No, the Duchess of Montpensier."

"She in Paris?"

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes."

"Well! what if she be? I do not fear women."

"It is true we ought only to fear men. But she comes to announce the arrival of her brother."

"The arrival of M. de Guise?"

"Yes."

"And you think this will embarrass me?"

"Oh! nothing embarrasses you."

"Pass me the ink and paper."

"What for? to sign an order for M. de Guise to remain at Nancy?"

"Exactly! the idea must be good, since it occurred to you at the same time as to myself."

"Execrable! on the contrary."

"Why?"

"As soon as he receives it, he will know he is wanted in Paris, and he will come."

The king felt his anger rising. He looked sternly at Chicot.

"If you have only returned to talk like this, you might as well have remained where you were."

"What would you have, Henry? Phantoms are not flatterers."

"You confess, then, that you are a spirit?"

"I have never denied it."

"Chicot!"

"Come, don't be angry; for short-sighted as you are, you will become blind. Let us see; did you not tell me you held your brother in Flanders?"

"Yes, certainly, and I maintain that it is good policy."

"Now, listen, and don't let us quarrel. For what object do you suppose M. de Guise remains at Nancy?"

"To organize an army there."

"Good ; let us proceed calmly. For what purpose does he destine this army?"

"Ah! Chicot, you fatigue me with so many questions."

"Fatigue you, fatigue you, Henry! You will sleep better for it after. We were saying that he destined this army——"

"To attack the Huguenots in the north."

"Or rather to thwart your brother of Anjou, who has had himself proclaimed Duke of Brabant ; who is endeavoring to build for himself a little throne in Flanders ; and who constantly solicits your assistance to accomplish his object."

"Assistance which I always promise him, but which, of course, I shall never send."

"To the great joy of M. de Guise. Well ! Henry, a little advice."

"What is it?"

"If you feigned for once to send him this promised assistance ; if this assistance advanced towards Brussels, but only half-way?"

"Ah! yes, I understand," exclaimed Henry ; "M. de Guise would not move from the frontier."

"And the promise that Madame de Montpensier has given us Leaguers, that M. de Guise would be in Paris within a week?"

"Would be broken."

"It is you who say it, my master," said Chicot, quite at his ease. "Well, what do you think of the advice, Henry?"

"I think it good, yet——"

"What more?"

"While these two gentlemen are occupied with each other, yonder, in the north."

"Ah, yes, the south, is it not? you are right, Henry, it is from the south that the storm comes."

"During this time, will not my third plague put himself in motion? Do you know what Le Bearnais is doing?"

"No."

"He claims."

"What?"

"The towns that were his wife's dower."

"The insolent, to whom the honor of being allied to the house of France is not enough, and who dares to claim what belongs to him!"

"Cahors, for example, as if it would be good policy to abandon such a town to an enemy."

"No, indeed, it would not be good policy, but it would be that of an honest man, for example."

"Monsieur Chicot!"

"Let us fancy I have said nothing about it; you know that I do not interfere in family affairs."

"But this does not disturb me; I have an idea."

"Good."

"Let us return to the most pressing."

"To Flanders."

"I shall send some one to my brother in Flanders; but whom shall I send? to whom can I trust, *mon Dieu!* a mission of this importance?"

"Forsooth."

"Ah! I have it."

"And I also."

"You shall go, Chicot."

"Who? I go to Flanders?"

"Why not?"

"A dead man go to Flanders? Come, come."

"But since you are no longer Chicot, being at present Robert Briquet."

"Good, a bourgeois, a Leaguer, a friend of M. de Guise, performing the functions of an ambassador to M. le Duc d'Anjou."

"Do you refuse?"

"*Pardieu!*"

"You disobey me?"

"I disobey you! Do I owe you obedience?"

"You do not owe me obedience, wretch?"

"Have you ever given me anything that binds me to you? The little I have, came to me by inheritance; I am beggarly and obscure. Make me duke and peer; erect my lands of Chicotrie into a marquissate; endow me with five hundred thousand crowns, and then we will talk of embassies."

Henry was about to reply with one of those good reasons which kings always find when such reproaches are made them, when the massive velvet curtain was heard to creak on the rod.

"Monsieur le Duc de Joyeuse!" said the usher.

"Eh, *ventre de biche!* here is your affair," exclaimed Chicot. "Find me an ambassador who would represent you better than Messire Anne, I defy you."

"*Au fait,*" murmured Henry, "this devil of a man is a decidedly better adviser than any of my ministers."

"Ah! you agree with me, then?" said Chicot.

And he fell back in his chair, taking the shape of a ball, in such a manner that the most skilful sailor, accustomed to distinguish the least speck beneath the horizon, would not have distinguished a line above the sculpture of the large arm-chair in which he was buried.

Though M. de Joyeuse might be grand admiral of France, he saw no better than another.

The king uttered a cry of joy on perceiving his young favorite, and extended his hand.

"Seat yourself, Joyeuse, my child," he said to him; "*mon Dieu!* how late you are."

"Sire," replied Joyeuse, "your majesty is very good to notice it."

And the duke, approaching the head of the bed, seated himself on the pillows that filled the steps of the platform.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING GOOD AMBASSADORS.

CHICOT was still invisible in his great chair, Joyeuse reclining on the cushions, Henry huddled up in his bed, when the conversation began.

"Well, Joyeuse," demanded the king; "have you wandered much through the city?"

"Why, yes, sire," carelessly replied the duke.

"How quickly you disappeared from the Grève?"

"Listen, sire, frankly; it was but little amusing; and besides, I do not like to see men suffer."

"What a merciful heart!"

"No, a selfish heart; the sufferings of others affect my nerves."

"You know what occurred?"

"Where, sire?"

"*En Grève.*"

"No."

"Salcede denied everything."

"Ah!"

"You take it very indifferently."

"I?"

"Yes."

"I confess, sire, I do not consider what he says of much importance; besides I was sure he would recant."

"But since he had confessed."

"All the more reason; the first admissions put the Guises on their guard; they labored, while your majesty remained inactive; it could not be otherwise."

"What! you foresaw these things, and did not tell me?"

"Am I your minister, to talk about politics?"

"No more of that, Joyeuse."

"Sire!"

"I shall want your brother."

"My brother, as well as myself, sire, is at your majesty's service."

"Then I may count upon him?"

"No doubt."

"I wish to send him on a little mission."

"Out of Paris?"

"Yes."

"In that case it is impossible, sire."

"How so?"

"Du Bouchage cannot go away at this moment."

Henry raised himself on his elbow, and gazed at Joyeuse with open eyes.

"What does that mean?" he said.

Joyeuse supported the interrogating glance of the king with perfect serenity.

"Sire," he said, "it is the easiest thing in the world to understand. Du Bouchage is in love, but he has carried on his negotiations badly, and everything is going wrong. The poor boy is growing thinner and thinner."

"In fact," said the king, "I have observed it."

"And has become sad, *mordieux*! as though he had lived at the court of your majesty."

A kind of grunt, issuing from the corner of the chimney, interrupted Joyeuse, who looked around astonished.

"Pay no attention, Anne," said Henry, laughing, "it is some dog dreaming on the chair. You were saying, then, my friend, that poor Du Bouchage became gloomy."

"Yes, sire, as gloomy as death; it appears he has met with some woman of a funereal turn of mind. These encounters are terrible. However, one may succeed as well with this sort of woman as with others, if one only knows how to manage them."

"You would not have been embarrassed, libertine."

"Ah, you call me libertine because I love the women." Henry heaved a sigh.

"You say that this woman has a gloomy turn of mind?"

"So Du Bouchage pretends; I do not know her."

"And notwithstanding this sadness, you would succeed?"

"*Parbleu!* it is only necessary to act by contrasts. I know of no difficulties, except with women of a medium temperament; these exact, on the part of the besieger, a combination of graces and severity, which few persons succeed in combining. Du Bouchage, then, has fallen upon a melancholy woman, and his love is gloomy."

"Poor boy," said the king.

"You understand, sire," continued Joyeuse, "that he had no sooner confided in me, than I undertook to cure him."

"So that——"

"So that at the present moment the cure has begun."

"He is already less in love?"

"No, sire; but he hopes that the woman will be less cruel, which is a more agreeable mode of curing individuals than destroying their love. For the future, instead of sighing in unison with the lady, he will enliven her by every possible means; this evening, for example, I send to his mistress thirty Italian musicians, who will play under her balcony."

"Fie," said the king, "that is vulgar."

"Vulgar, is it? Thirty musicians who have not their equals in the whole world?"

"Ah, upon my word! when I was in love with Madame de Condé, music would not have amused me."

"Yes, sire, but you were in love."

"Madly," said the king.

A fresh grunt was heard, which sounded very much like a mocking laugh.

"You see that this is quite another thing, sire," said Joyeuse, endeavoring, in vain, to discover whence came

the interruption. "The lady, on the contrary, is as indifferent as a statue, and as cold as an iceberg."

"And you think the music will melt the ice, animate the statue?"

"Certainly, I think so."

The king shook his head.

"Well! I do not say," continued Joyeuse, "that at the first stroke of the bow the lady will throw herself into the arms of Du Bouchage; no, she will be touched at their making all this noise on her account; by degrees she will accustom herself to the concerts, and if she does not accustom herself, well! we shall have comedy, jugglers, enchantments, poetry, horses, every folly on earth, in fact, so that if gayety does not return to the fair recluse, it must at least return to Du Bouchage."

"I hope so for him," said Henry; "but let us leave Du Bouchage, since it will be so trying to him to leave Paris at this moment; it is not indispensable to me that he alone should accomplish this mission, but I hope you, who give such good advice, are not yourself a slave to some pretty passion."

"I!" exclaimed Joyeuse, "I have never been so perfectly free in my life."

"Wonderful! Then you have nothing to do?"

"Absolutely nothing, sire."

"But I thought you were in love with a fair lady?"

"Oh! yes, the mistress of M. de Mayenne, a woman who adored me."

"Well?"

"Well! imagine that to-night, after giving Du Bouchage his lesson, I left him to go to her; I went, my imagination warmed with the theories I had been developing, and I swear to you, sire, I thought myself almost as much in love as Henry. I found a trembling, frightened woman; the first idea that occurred to me was that I had disturbed some one; I looked round me, no one; I endeavored to calm her, it was useless; I questioned, she did not reply;

I attempted to kiss her, she turned her head, and, as I frowned, she became angry, and rose; we quarrelled, and she told me she should never be at home to me any more."

"Poor Joyeuse," said the king, smiling; "and how did you act?"

"*Pardieu*, sire, I took my sword and my cloak, I made her a grand bow, and I left without once turning my head."

"Bravo, Joyeuse! very courageous," said the king.

"All the more courageous, sire, that I fancied I heard the poor girl sigh."

"Will you not repent of your stoicism?" said Henry.

"No, sire; if I had repented for one moment, I would have returned there directly. But nothing will drive away the idea that the poor girl left me against her wishes."

"And yet you left?"

"I am here."

"And you will not return there?"

"Never; if I had M. de Mayenne's corpulence I do not say; but I am slender, I have a right to be proud."

"My friend," said Henry seriously, "this rupture is lucky for your safety."

"I do not deny it, sire, but, meanwhile, I shall be cruelly bored for a week, having nothing to do, not knowing what to turn to; so that I have thought of being most deliciously idle. It is positively amusing to be bored; I have not been used to it, and I think it is high-toned."

"Certainly it is high-toned," said the king, "I made it so."

"But here is my plan, sire; I arranged it while returning from the square of Notre Dame to the Louvre. I shall be carried here every day in a litter; your majesty will say your prayers, I shall read books of chemistry or navigation, which will be much better as I am a sailor. I

shall have some little dogs to play with yours, or rather some kittens: they would be more graceful; we will afterwards take some cream, and M. d'Epernon will tell us stories. I wish to get fat, and when Du Bouchage's lady shall become gay instead of sad, we will look out for another, who from being gay will turn sad; this will make a change, but all this without moving, sire; we are only moderately comfortable when seated, and very comfortable when in bed. Ah! the dear cushions, sire; it is plain that the upholsterers of your majesty work for a king who is bored."

"Fie, Anne," said the king.

"Why so, sire?"

"A man of your age and rank to become idle and corpulent: what an ugly idea!"

"I do not think so, sire."

"I will occupy you with something."

"If it is wearisome, I should like it."

A third grunt was heard; one would have said that the dog laughed at the words pronounced by Joyeuse.

"That dog is very intelligent," said Henry; "he guesses what I would have you do."

"What would you have me do, sire?"

"You must put on your boots."

Joyeuse made a movement of terror.

"Oh! no, do not ask that of me, sire; it is against all my ideas."

"Get on horseback."

Joyeuse started.

"On horseback! no, I only go in a litter now. Did not your majesty hear?"

"Come, Joyeuse, a truce to jesting; you hear me, you must boot yourself and mount your horse."

"No, sire," replied the duke, with the greatest seriousness, "impossible."

"And why impossible?" demanded Henry, angrily.

"Because, because—I am an admiral."

"Well?"

"And admirals do not ride on horseback."

"Ah! that is it, is it?" said Henry.

Joyeuse replied by one of those signs of the head, like children when they are too obstinate to obey, too timid to reply.

"Very well! Monsieur l'Amiral de France, you will not go on horseback, you are right, it is not the place of an admiral to be on a horse; his position is on boats or galleys. You will therefore immediately repair to Rouen by boat; at Rouen you will find your admiral's galley. You will immediately go on board, and you will shape your course for Antwerp."

"For Antwerp!" exclaimed Joyeuse, in a tone as despairing as though he had received orders to depart for Canton or Valparaiso.

"I believe I said so," replied the king, in a freezing tone, which established without further dispute his right as chief and his will as sovereign; "I believe I have said so, and I do not mean to repeat it."

Joyeuse without exhibiting the slightest resistance, buttoned his cloak, placed his sword under his arm, and took his velvet cap from off the chair.

"What a trouble I have to make myself obeyed," grumbled Henry; "if I sometimes forget that I am master, every one, at least, except myself, ought to remember it."

Joyeuse, mute and stately, bowed, and according to etiquette, placed his hand on the guard of his sword.

"Your orders, sire," he said, in a voice which, by its submissive accent, immediately changed to melting wax the monarch's will.

"You will repair to Rouen," he said to him, "where I desire you to embark, unless you prefer going to Brussels by land."

Henry expected a reply from Joyeuse; the latter merely bowed.

"Do you prefer the land route?" demanded Henry.

"I have no preference, when I have an order to execute, sire," replied Joyeuse.

"There now, you are sulky," exclaimed Henry. "Ah! kings have no friends!"

"He who gives orders can only expect to be obeyed," replied Joyeuse, with solemnity.

"Monsieur," replied the wounded king, "you will go, then, to Rouen; you will go on board your ship; you will take the garrisons of Caudebec, Harfleur, and Dieppe, which I shall replace afterwards; you will put them on board six transports, which you will place at the service of my brother, who is waiting for the assistance I have promised him."

"My commission if you please, sire," said Joyeuse.

"And since when have you been unable to act by virtue of your rank as admiral?" said the king.

"I only obey; and as far as I can, sire, I avoid all responsibility."

"Well, then, Monsieur the Duke, you will receive the commission at your hôtel at the moment of your departure."

"And when will this moment be, sire?"

"In an hour."

Joyeuse bowed respectfully, and turned towards the door.

The king's heart misgave him.

"What," said he, "not even the courtesy of an adieu! Monsieur the Admiral, you are not over civil; but this is a common reproach to sailors. Well, well! perhaps I may have more satisfaction from my colonel-general of infantry."

"Pardon me, sire," stammered Joyeuse, "but I am a worse courtier than I am a sailor, and I understand your majesty regrets what you have done for me."

And he left, slamming the door violently, behind the tapestry, which became inflated with the wind.

"See how I am loved by those for whom I have done everything!" exclaimed the king. "Ah, Joyeuse—ungrateful Joyeuse!"

"Well, will you not recall him?" said Chicot, advancing towards the bed. "Because you have exerted a little power, for once in your life, you repent it."

"Listen, then," replied the king; "you are very good. Do you think it agreeable to be at sea in October, and receive the wind and rain on your shoulders? I would like to see you there, egotist."

"You may, great king, you may."

"To see you going over mountains and valleys."

"You are quite welcome to do so; my greatest desire, just now, is to travel."

"And if I sent you anywhere, you would accept?"

"Not only would I accept, but I implore it, I entreat it."

"A mission?"

"A mission."

"You will go to Navarre?"

"I would go to the devil, great king."

"Are you jesting, buffoon?"

"Sire, I was not over gay during my lifetime, and I swear to you, that I am much sadder since my death."

"But you refused just now to leave Paris?"

"My gracious sovereign, I was wrong, very wrong, and I repent it."

"So that you now wish to leave Paris?"

"Immediately, illustrious king; this very moment, great monarch."

"I no longer understand you," said Henry.

"Did you not hear the words of the grand admiral of France?"

"Which?"

"Those in which he announced that he had broken with the mistress of M. de Mayenne."

"Yes; well, what then?"

"If this woman, in love with a charming fellow like the duke, for Joyeuse is charming——"

"Undoubtedly."

"If this woman dismisses him with a sigh, she has some motive for it."

"Probably, otherwise, she would not have dismissed him."

"Well, this motive, do you know it?"

"No."

"You do not guess it?"

"No."

"It is that M. de Mayenne is about to return."

"Oh, oh!" said the king.

"You comprehend at last; I congratulate you."

"Yes, I comprehend; but——"

"But what?"

"I don't think your reason very substantial."

"Give me yours, Henry; I have no other wish than to find them excellent."

"Why did not this woman break with Mayenne, instead of dismissing Joyeuse? Do you not think that Joyeuse would willingly have accompanied M. de Mayenne to the Pre aux Clercs and made a hole through his great belly? The sword of our Joyeuse is a mighty one."

"Very well; but M. de Mayenne has a treacherous dagger, if Joyeuse has a mighty sword. Do you remember Saint Megrin?" Henry heaved a sigh, and raised his eyes to Heaven. "The woman who really loves, has no great relish to see her lover killed, she prefers to quit him, and gain time; she particularly prefers to preserve her own life. That dear house of Guise is diabolically brutal."

"Ah! you may be right."

"It is very lucky."

"Yes, and I begin to think Mayenne will return; but you, you, Chicot, you are not a timorous or love-sick woman."

"I! Henry; I am a prudent man, a man who has an open account with M. de Mayenne; if he finds me he will begin again. This good M. de Mayenne is a formidable adversary."

"Well?"

"Well! he will play so well, that I shall receive a dagger thrust."

"Bah! I know my Chicot, he will not receive without paying."

"You are right, I will pay him a dozen that will be the end of him."

"So much the better, the game would then be up."

"So much the worse, *morbleu*! on the contrary, so much the worse: the family would make an outcry, you would have the whole League upon you, and some fine morning you would say to me: 'Chicot, my friend, excuse me, but I am obliged to have you broken on the wheel.'"

"I shall say that?"

"You will say that, and what is even worse, you would do it, great king. I would rather put the matter the other way, do you understand? I am not badly off as I am, and I wish to remain so. Look you, all these arithmetical progressions towards rancor, appear to me dangerous; I will therefore go to Navarre, if you will be good enough to send me."

"Without doubt I will send you."

"I wait your orders, gracious prince."

And Chicot assumed the same attitude as Joyeuse.

"But," said the king, "you do not know if the mission will be agreeable to you."

"Never mind, I request it."

"Well, you see, Chicot," said Henry, "I have certain projects of embroiling Margot and her husband."

"Divide and reign," said Chicot; "this has been the A B C of politics for the last century."

"So that you have no repugnance?"

"Is that my business?" replied Chicot; "you will do as you wish, great prince. I am ambassador, that is all, you have no accounts to give me, and provided I am inviolable—oh! as to that, you understand, I insist upon it."

"Still," said Henry, "you must know what you will say to my brother-in-law."

"I say something! no, no, no!"

"What, no, no, no?"

"I will go wherever you like, but I will say nothing."

"Then you refuse?"

"I refuse the message, but I accept the letter. He who carries a message has always some responsibility; he who presents a letter, gets only a second-hand bullying."

"Very well. I will give you a letter; that is a part of my policy."

"Only see how it turns out; give it to me."

"What do you say?"

"I say, give it."

And Chicot extended his hand.

"Ah! don't imagine that a letter like this can be written in a moment; it requires reflection, combination, weight."

"Well, weigh, reflect, combine; I will return to-morrow morning at day-break, and then I will take it."

"Why will you not sleep here?"

"Here?"

"Yes, in your chair."

"*Peste!* that is done with; I shall sleep no more at the Louvre—a phantom seen sleeping in a chair, what an absurdity!"

"But," said the king, "I wish you to know my intentions with regard to Margot and her husband. You are a Gascon; my letter will create a sensation at the court of Navarre. They will question you; you must be in a position to reply. Why, the devil! you represent me; I do not wish you to look like a fool."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Chicot, shrugging his shoulders; "how obtuse you are, great king. Do you think I am going to carry a letter two hundred and fifty leagues, without knowing its contents! Be easy; *ventre de biche!* at my first stopping-place I shall open your letter."

What! for the last ten years you have sent ambassadors to all parts of the world, and you know no better than that! Come! put your body and soul to sleep and I will return to my solitude."

"Where is your solitude?"

"At the cemetery of the Grands Innocents, great prince."

Henry looked at Chicot with that astonishment which he had not been able to drive from his looks even during the last two hours he had spent in his company.

"Ah! you did not expect that, did you?" said Chicot, taking his cap and cloak; "this is the result of being in communication with the inhabitants of the other world. It is understood, to-morrow my messenger or I will be here."

"Very well, but your messenger must have a password. How shall I know him when he arrives?"

"Wonderful! if it is myself, I shall come for myself; if it is my messenger, he will come from the Shade."

And at these words, he disappeared so gently, that the superstitious mind of Henry doubted if it were really a body or a spirit who had passed through the door without making it creak, under the drapery without agitating one of its folds.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW, AND FOR WHAT REASON CHICOT HAD DIED.

CHICOT, a substantial body—with due respect to those of our readers who are such partisans of the marvellous as to think we should have had the audacity to introduce a ghost into our history—Chicot had departed, after having told the king, in his usual way, under the form of raillery, all the truths he had to say to him.

This is what had happened :

After the death of the king's friends, and since the trouble and conspiracies fomented by the Guises, Chicot had reflected. Brave, and careless, as we know him to be, he had a great fondness for life, which amused him, as it generally does men with superior minds. It is only the fools who find no amusement in this world and seek it in the next.

The result of the reflection we have mentioned was, that he had more fear of M. de Mayenne's revenge than faith in the king's protection ; he said to himself, with that practical philosophy which characterized him, that in this world nothing that is actually done can be undone. Therefore, all the halberds, and all the courts of justice of the king of France could not repair, however slightly visible it might appear, a certain opening which M. de Mayenne's dagger would have made in Chicot's doublet.

He had, therefore, made up his mind. He was tired of the part of a jester, which at every moment he burned to exchange for a more serious one ; and with the familiarities of royalty which, in these times, were leading him straight to ruin.

Chicot began by placing between M. de Mayenne's sword and his own skin the greatest possible distance. For this purpose he departed for Beaune, in the three-fold view of leaving Paris, embracing his friend Gorenflot, and testing the famous wine of 1550, which had been so warmly mentioned in that famous letter which terminates our narrative of *la Dame de Monsereau*.

The consolation was efficacious ; at the end of two months, Chicot observed that he was much fatter, and that this would serve him as a disguise, but he also discovered that in getting fat he had also become greatly attached to Gorenflot, more so than was consistent in a man of talent. Mind, therefore, prevailed over matter ; after Chicot had drunk some hundred bottles of the famous wine of 1550, and devoured the twenty-two volumes which

composed the library of the priory, and in which the prior had read this Latin axiom: *Bonum vinum lætificat cor hominis*, Chicot felt a great weight about the stomach, and a great emptiness in the brain.

"I would willingly become a friar," he thought, "but near Gorenflot, I should be too much the master, and in another abbey, I should not be sufficiently so. Certainly the gown would disguise me for ever in the eyes of M. de Mayenne; but by all the devils! there are other means but Gorenflot's vulgar ones; let us search. I have read in another work, it is true, but this one is not in Gorenflot's library, *Quere et invenies*."

Chicot searched, then, and this is what he found. For the time it was novel enough.

He unburdened himself to Gorenflot, and begged him to write to the king under his dictation.

Gorenflot, it is true, wrote with difficulty, but at length he wrote that Chicot had retired to the priory, that his health had been undermined by the grief he felt at being separated from his master after the latter's reconciliation with M. de Mayenne, that he had made an effort to struggle, by seeking amusement, but that the sacrifice was too great for him, and that at length he had succumbed.

Chicot himself had written to the king; the letter, dated in the year 1580, was divided into five paragraphs.

Each of these paragraphs was supposed to have been written at a day's interval, as the disease progressed.

The first paragraph was written and signed with a firm, bold hand.

The second was traced with a steady hand; but the signature, though still legible, was already very shaky.

He had written *Chic*—at the end of the third.

Ch—at the end of the fourth.

Lastly he had made a *C*. with a blot at the conclusion of the fifth.

This blot from a dying man had produced on the king the most painful effect.

This explains why he had looked upon Chicot as a phantom and spirit.

We would readily insert Chicot's letter, but Chicot was an eccentric man, as they say, and as the style is the man, his epistolary style especially was so eccentric, that we dare not reproduce the letter here, whatever effect we might expect from it.

But it will be found in the "Mémoires de l'Etoile." It is dated in 1580, as we have said, the "year of the great *cocuages*," adds Chicot.

At the end of this letter, wishing to profit by the king's interest before it had time to grow cool, Gorenflot added that since the death of his friend, the Priory of Beaune had become odious to him, and that he preferred Paris.

This postscript had been drawn from Gorenflot with much difficulty by his friend Chicot. For Gorenflot, on the contrary, found himself particularly well off at Beaune, and Panurge too. He piteously observed to Chicot that the wine is always adulterated when we are not present to choose it on the spot. But Chicot promised the worthy prior to come in person every year, and make his provision of romaneé, volney, and chambertin, and as on this point, as well as on several others, Gorenflot acknowledged Chicot's superiority, he finished by yielding to his friend's solicitations.

In reply to the letter from Gorenflot, and to Chicot's last farewell, the king had written with his own hand :

"MONSIEUR THE PRIOR—You will give a holy and poetic burial to poor Chicot, whom I regret with all my soul, for he was not only a devoted friend, but also a very good gentleman, although he himself could never get beyond his great-great-grandfather in his genealogy. You will surround him with flowers, and arrange that he may rest in the sun, which he loved so much, being from the south. As to yourself, whom I honor the more for the grief I share with you, you shall leave as you desire, the Priory of

Beaune. I have too much need of devoted men and good priests to keep you at a distance. In consequence, I name you Prior of the Jacobins, your residence being fixed near the Porte Saint Antoine, in Paris, a neighborhood to which our poor friend was particularly attached.

“Your affectionate

“HENRY,

“who prays you not to forget him
“in your holy prayers.”

Let us imagine whether such a letter, written entirely by the royal hand, made the prior stare; whether he admired the powerful genius of Chicot, and whether he hastened to take his flight towards the honors that awaited him.

For ambition, we may remember, had already planted one of its clinging roots in the heart of Gorenflot—of Gorenflot, whose Christian name had always been *Modeste*, and who, since he had been Prior of Beaune, called himself Dom Modeste Gorenflot.

Everything had taken place to the satisfaction of the king and of Chicot. A fagot of thorns intended to represent physically and allegorically Chicot's body, had been interred in the sun, among the flowers, under a handsome vine tree; and once dead and buried in effigy, Chicot assisted Gorenflot in his removal.

Dom Modeste was then installed in grand pomp at the Priory of the Jacobins. Chicot chose the night to slip into Paris. He had purchased near the Porte Bussy a small house, which cost him three hundred crowns; and when he wished to see Gorenflot, he had three roads; that through the town, which was the shortest, that along the banks of the river, which was the most poetical, and lastly, that which ran along the walls of Paris, and which was the safest.

But Chicot, who was thoughtful and pensive, generally chose that of the Seine: and as at this time the river was

not enclosed within walls of stone, the water, as the poet says, came lapping over its wide beach, along which, more than once, the inhabitants of the City might have seen Chicot's long shadow lengthen itself in the clear moonlight.

Having settled himself and changed his name, Chicot studied how to change his face; he called himself Robert Briquet, as we are aware, and walked with a slight stoop forward: then the excitement and vicissitudes of five or six years had rendered him nearly bald, so much so that his hair, formerly black and crisp, had, like the ebbing of the tide, retired from the front to the back.

Besides, as we have said, he worked at that art, dear to ancient mimics, which consisted in changing, by knowing contractions, the natural play of the features. The result of this assiduous study was that, seen in the open day, Chicot, when he chose to give himself the trouble, was a veritable Robert Briquet, that is, a man whose mouth extended from ear to ear, whose nose touched his chin, whose eyes squinted frightfully; all without grimace, but not without charms for the amateurs of change, since from being fine, long, and angular, his face had become wide, cheerful, obtuse, and stupid.

There were his long arms and legs which Chicot could not shorten; but as he was very industrious, he had, as we have observed, bent his back, which made his arms nearly as long as his legs.

To these facial exercises, he added the precaution of becoming intimate with no one. In fact, however dislocated Chicot might be, he could not forever preserve the same posture. How could he appear hunchback at noon, when he had been straight at ten o'clock; and what excuse could be given to a friend who sees you suddenly change your face, because, in walking together, you meet by chance a suspicious face?

Robert Briquet, therefore, led the life of a recluse. Besides, it suited his taste; his only amusement was to visit

Gorenflot, and finish with him the famous wine of 1550, which the worthy prior had taken good care to remove from the cellars of Beaume.

But vulgar minds are liable to changes as well as higher ones; Gorenflot changed, not physically, thank God! but morally.

He beheld, in his power and at his discretion, the individual who, until then, had held his destinies in his hand. Chicot, coming to dine at the priory, appeared in his eyes, an enslaved Chicot; and Gorenflot from this moment thought too much of himself, and not enough of Chicot.

The latter observed, without being offended, the change in his friend; those he had experienced from the king had inured him to this sort of philosophy: he was the more cautious, that was all. Instead of going every other day to the priory, he now only went once a week, then once in a fortnight, and at length once a month only. Gorenflot was so inflated that he did not notice it.

Chicot was too much of a philosopher to be sensitive; he laughed in his sleeve at Gorenflot's ingratitude and scratched his nose and chin as usual.

"Water and time," said he, "are the two most powerful dissolvents I know; the one melts the hardest stone; the other, pride. Let us wait."—And he waited.

He was in this position, when the events we have narrated took place; in the midst there seemed to arise some of those new elements which foretell great political catastrophes. But as his king, whom he still loved, appeared in the coming events to run some dangers analogous to those from which he had already preserved him, he resolved to appear to him as a spirit, and with this sole object, to show him the future. We have seen how the announcement of M. de Mayenne's expected arrival, an announcement involved in the dismissal of Joyeuse, and which Chicot, with his crafty intelligence, had ferreted out, had made Chicot pass from the condition of

a phantom to the condition of a living man, and from the position of a prophet to that of an ambassador.

And now that we have explained all that might have appeared obscure in our narrative, we shall proceed with Chicot, if our readers will permit us, and follow him from the Louvre to his little house at the carrefour of Bussy.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SERENADE.

To go to his own house after leaving the Louvre Chicot had not far to walk.

He descended to the river bank and began to cross the Seine in a small boat, which he managed by himself, and which he had brought from the shores of Nesle and anchored at the deserted quay of the Louvre.

"It is strange," he said to himself as he rowed, looking at the same time at the windows of the palace, one alone, that of the king's chamber, being lighted, despite the advanced hour of the night, "it is strange, after so many years, Henry is still the same; some have risen, others have fallen, some have died, while he has gained a few wrinkles on his brow and in his heart, no more. He has the same feeble yet lofty mind, still fantastical and poetical, still the same selfish spirit, always demanding more than we can give him—friendship from the indifferent—love from the friendly—devotion from the loving; and more sad than any man in his kingdom. In truth, there is no one but myself, I think, who has fathomed this singular compound of debauchery and repentance, impiety and superstition, as there are none but myself who know the Louvre, through the corridors of which so many favorites have passed to exile or oblivion. I am the only one who can handle with-

out danger, and play with that crown which burns the imagination of so many men before it burns their fingers."

Chicot heaved a sigh, more philosophical than sad, and applied himself vigorously to his oars.

"By the way," he said, suddenly, "the king did not speak of giving me any money for my journey ; this proves, at least, that he thinks me a friend."

Chicot laughed silently, and with another stroke of the oar, drove his boat upon the soft sands, where it remained imbedded.

He then fastened the prow to a stake by a knot, of which he had the secret, and which in these innocent times, we speak by comparison, was a sufficient security, and directed his steps towards his residence, situated scarcely two gun-shots from the bank of the river.

On entering the Rue des Augustins, he was struck by the sound of instruments and voices, which filled with harmony the neighborhood, usually so peaceful at these advanced hours.

"Is there a wedding here?" he thought at first; "*ventre de biche!* I had but five hours to sleep, and I shall be obliged to keep awake, I, who do not intend to marry."

As he advanced he observed a great light reflected on the windows of the scattered houses of his street; this light was produced by a dozen torches held by pages and footmen, whilst the twenty-four musicians, under the orders of a frantic Italian, were performing on their violins, psalters, cistres, rebees, bass viols, trumpets, and drums.

This noisy army was placed in good order before a house which Chicot, with surprise, recognized as his own.

The invisible general, who had directed this manœuvre, had arranged the musicians and pages with their faces turned toward the residence of Robert Briquet, their eyes gazing at his windows in ardent contemplation.

Chicot remained a moment stupefied, listening to this hubbub, then striking his thighs with his bony hands:

"Why," said he, "there is some mistake; it is impossible that they should be making all this noise for me."

Approaching nearer, he mingled with the spectators who had been attracted to the scene, and looking attentively round him, he convinced himself that the light from the torches illumined his house, as all the harmony was directed towards it; no one in the crowd took any notice of the house opposite, or of any others in the vicinity.

"Really," said Chicot to himself, "it is for me. Has some unknown princess fallen in love with me, perchance?"

This supposition, however flattering, did not appear to convince Chicot.

He turned towards the house facing his own.

The two second-story windows of this house, the only ones that had no blinds, received at intervals some flashes from the torches; but the house itself seemed deprived of life, unoccupied by any human being.

"They must sleep soundly in that house," said Chicot; "*ventre de biche!* such a bacchanal would awaken the dead."

During all these questions and answers which Chicot made to himself, the orchestra continued its symphonies as if it were playing before an assembly of kings and emperors.

"Pardon me, my friend," said Chicot, addressing himself to a torch-bearer, "but can you tell me, if you please, for whom all this music is intended?"

"For the bourgeois who resides there," replied the valet, pointing out to Chicot his own house.

"For me?" resumed Chicot; "it is decidedly for me."

Chicot cut through the crowd to read the explanation of the enigma on the sleeves and bosoms of the pages, but all heraldry had disappeared under a species of wall-colored tabard.

"To whom do you belong, my friend?" demanded Chicot

of a tambourine player who was warming his fingers with his breath, having no part to play at that moment.

"To the bourgeois who lives here," replied the instrumentalist, pointing with his switch to Robert Briquet's house.

"Ah! ah!" said Robert, "they not only come for me, but they belong to me. Better and better—at last we shall see something."

And arming his face with the most complicated grimace he could assume, he elbowed the pages right and left, lackeys and musicians, to reach the door—a manœuvre he did not accomplish without difficulty; and there, visible and resplendent in the circle formed by the torch-bearers, he drew the key from his pocket, opened the door, entered, closed the door, and then the blinds.

Ascending to his balcony, he brought a leather chair and placed it in the projection, comfortably seated himself in it, his chin resting on the rail; and there, without seeming to observe the laughter which greeted his appearance:

"Gentlemen," he said, "are you sure there is no mistake? Is all this really for me?"

"Are you Maître Robert Briquet?" asked the director of the orchestra.

"In person."

"Well, we are quite at your service, monsieur," replied the Italian, with a movement of his baton, which started a new outbreak of melody.

"Surely this is unintelligible," said Chicot, glancing with his sharp eyes over the whole crowd and the neighboring houses.

All the inhabitants of the houses were at their windows, on the steps, or mingled with the groups stationed before the door.

Maître Fournichon, his wife, and the whole company of the forty-five, women, children, and lackeys, filled the openings of the Sword of the Brave Chevalier.

The opposite house was dark—silent as the grave.

Chicot endeavored to discover with his eyes the solution of this puzzling enigma, when suddenly he fancied he saw, under the very awning of his house, through the chinks of the balcony floor, a little beneath his feet, a man completely enveloped in a dark-colored cloak, wearing a black hat, with a red plume and a long sword, who, thinking himself unnoticed, was gazing earnestly at the opposite house—that house, deserted, silent, and dead.

From time to time the leader of the orchestra left his post and spoke softly to this man.

Chicot instantly understood that here lay the whole interest of the scene, and that this black hat concealed the face of a gentleman.

His attention was now confined to this person; the part of observer was easy to him, his position on the rail of the balcony allowed him to distinguish among the crowd, and even under the awning; he succeeded, therefore, in following every movement of the mysterious stranger, whose first imprudence would not fail to disclose his features.

Suddenly, and while Chicot was wholly absorbed in his observations, a gentleman on horseback, followed by two squires, appeared at the corner of the street, and hastily drove away with his switch those who persisted in pressing too close to the musicians.

“Monsieur de Joyeuse,” murmured Chicot, who recognized at once the grand-admiral of France, booted and spurred in obedience to the king’s order.

The crowd dispersed, the orchestra was silent; probably a sign from the master had imposed a cessation of the music.

The horseman approached the gentleman concealed under the balcony.

“Well! Henry,” he said, “what news?”

“None, my brother.”

“Nothing?”

"No, she has not even appeared."

"These men have not made noise enough?"

"They have deafened the whole neighborhood."

"Did they not cry, as I told them, that it was all in honor of this bourgeois?"

"They cried so well, that he is there in person, in his balcony, listening to the serenade."

"And has she not appeared?"

"Neither she, nor any one."

"The idea, however, was ingenious," said Joyeuse, disappointed; "for she might indeed, without compromising herself, do as these worthy people, and enjoy the music given to her neighbors."

Henry shook his head.

"Ah! it is plain you do not know her, my brother," he said.

"Yes, yes, I know her; that is, I know women, and as she is a woman, why, we will not despair."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* brother, you say that in a very discouraging tone."

"Not the least in the world; but, from to-day, every evening the bourgeois must have his serenade."

"But she will go away."

"Why? if you say nothing, if you do not allude to her, if you always remain concealed? Did the bourgeois say anything when they offered him this gallantry?"

"He harangued the orchestra. And stay, brother, see, he is going to speak again."

In fact, Briquet, resolved to bring the matter to an explanation, rose to address once more the leader of the band.

"Hold your tongue, up there, and go in," cried Anne, in a bad humor; "the devil! since you have had your serenade, you have nothing to say, so keep quiet."

"My serenade, my serenade!" replied Chicot, in his most gracious manner; "I should like to know at least to whom my serenade is addressed."

"To your daughter, imbecile."

"Pardon me, monsieur, but I have no daughter."

"To your wife, then."

"Thank God! I am not married."

"Well, then, to yourself, monsieur, Yes, to yourself, and if you do not retire——"

Joyeuse, suiting the action to the word, urged his horse towards the balcony, and this through the band of musicians.

"*Ventre de biche!*" cried Chicot, "if the music be for me, who dares to crush my musicians."

"You old fool," grumbled Joyeuse, raising his head, "if you do not hide your ugly carcass in your vulture's nest, the musicians shall break their instruments on your head."

"Leave the poor man alone, brother," said Du Bouchage; "the fact is, that he must be very much astonished."

"And why should he be astonished, *morbleu!* Besides, you can see that in getting up a quarrel, we shall attract some one to the window. Let us thrash the bourgeois—burn his house, if necessary, but, *corbleu!* let us make a commotion."

"For pity's sake, brother," said Henry, "let us not force the attention of this woman—we are beaten—let us submit."

Briquet had not lost a word of this last dialogue which had thrown much light on his hitherto confused ideas; he, therefore, mentally made his preparations of defence, knowing the humor of the individual who attacked him.

But Joyeuse, yielding to his brother's request, no longer insisted. He dismissed the pages, valets, musicians, and leader.

Then drawing his brother aside,

"I am in despair," he said; "everything conspires against us."

"What do you mean?"

"I have not the time to assist you."

"You are in travelling costume; I had not yet observed it."

"I set off to-night for Antwerp, with a mission from the king."

"When did he give it to you?"

"To-night."

"*Mon Dieu!*"

"Come with me, I entreat you."

Henry let his arms drop.

"Do you command me, brother?" he inquired, turning pale at the thought of leaving.

Anne made a movement.

"If you command," continued Henry, "I shall obey."

"I only beg you, Du Bouchage, nothing more."

"Thank you, brother."

Joyeuse shrugged his shoulders.

"Just as you like, Joyeuse; but you see, if I were forced to give up spending my nights in this street, if I could no longer gaze at these windows——"

"Well?"

"I should die!"

"Poor fool!"

"My heart is there, you see, brother," said Henry, extending his hand towards the house; "my life is there; do not ask me to live if you tear my heart from my bosom."

The duke crossed his arms with a mixture of anger and pity, bit his delicate mustache, and, after reflecting for a few moments in silence, said:

"If your father begged you to allow yourself to be attended by Miron, who is a philosopher as well as a physician?"

"I would reply to our father, that I am not ill, that my head is sound, and that Miron does not heal the love-sick."

"We must adopt your mode of looking at it, then, Henry; but why should I disturb myself? This woman is but a woman, you are persevering, there is no cause

for despair, and on my return I shall see you, more light-hearted, more joyous, and more gladsome than myself."

"Yes, yes, my good brother," replied the young man, pressing the hand of his friend; "yes, I shall recover—yes, I shall be happy—yes, I shall be light-hearted; thank you for your friendship, which is my most precious jewel."

"Next to your love!"

"Before my life."

Joyeuse, deeply affected, notwithstanding his apparent frivolity, suddenly interrupted his brother.

"Let us go," said he; "the torches are extinguished, the instruments on the backs of the musicians, the pages on the way."

"Go, brother, I follow you," said Du Bouchage, sighing as he left the street.

"I hear you," said Joyeuse; "the last adieux to the deserted window—it is but just; but you have also one for me."

Henry passed his arms round his brother's neck, who stooped to embrace him.

"No," he said, "I will accompany you to the gates; but ride off about a hundred paces. Thinking the street solitary, she may perhaps show herself."

Anne rode his horse towards the escort, at a short distance.

"We have no occasion for your services until further notice. Go."

The torches disappeared; the musicians' conversation and the pages' laughter came to an end as well as the last plaintive sounds coming from the violin chords as some hand chanced to touch them.

Henry gave a last look at the house, sent a last prayer to the windows, and constantly looking back slowly joined his brother, who preceded the two squires.

Robert Briquet, seeing the two young men depart with the musicians, judged that the *dénouement* of the scene, if the scene was to have a *dénouement*, was about to follow.

In consequence, he retired noisily from the balcony, and closed the window.

Some idlers still remained at their post, but in about ten minutes the most persevering had disappeared.

In the meantime, Robert Briquet had gained the roof of his house, indented, like one of the Flemish houses, and concealing himself behind one of these indentations, he observed the opposite windows.

As soon as the noise in the street had ceased, and neither instruments, footsteps, nor voices were to be heard ; in fact, when everything was restored to order, one of the top windows of the strange house was mysteriously opened, and a prudent head looked out.

"Nothing more," murmured the voice of a man, "consequently no danger ; it was some mystification addressed to our neighbor. You may leave your hiding-place, Madame, and return to your own rooms."

At these words the man closed the window, struck a light with a flint, and passed the lamp to a hand stretched out to receive it.

Chicot was looking on with all his might.

But he had no sooner perceived the pale and sublime face of the woman who received the lamp, he had no sooner caught the mild but sorrowful glance exchanged between the attendant and the mistress, than he himself turned pale, and felt a cold shudder run through his veins.

The young woman was scarcely twenty-four years of age. She descended the stairs ; her attendant followed her.

"Ah !" murmured Chicot, passing his hand across his forehead to wipe away the perspiration, and at the same time to drive away some terrible vision ; "ah ! Count du Bouchage, brave and handsome fellow, mad lover, who talks of being joyful, gladsome, and light-hearted, give your motto to your brother, for never more will you say *hilariter !*" *

* "Joyously," the device of Henry de Joyeuse.

He then descended to his room, his brow clouded as though he had witnessed some terrible scene—some dreadful abyss—and sat down in the darkness, subjugated in turn, and perhaps more completely than any one, by the melancholy influence of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHICOT'S PURSE.

CHICOT passed the remainder of the night dreaming in his arm-chair. Dreaming is the proper word, for they were dreams, rather than thoughts that occupied his mind.

To return to the past to see clearly in the light of a single glance an entire epoch almost effaced from memory,—that is not to think. Chicot dwelt, for the night, in a world already left by him far behind, and peopled by shades, illustrious or gracious, whom the glance of the pale woman, like a faithful lamp, discovered to him, passing one by one before him, with their train of happy and terrible memories.

Chicot, who so much regretted his lost sleep on returning from the Louvre, did not even think of going to bed. When dawn gently silvered the windows of his room :

“The hour for ghosts has passed,” said he ; “we must now think a little of the living.”

He rose, buckled on his large sword, threw over his shoulders a woollen cloak of a dark plum color, and of a texture impervious to the heaviest rain, and with the stoic firmness of a sage, he examined, at a glance, the depth of his purse and the soles of his shoes.

The latter appeared to Chicot fit for a campaign ; the other deserved some little attention.

We shall therefore make a halt in our narrative, to take time to describe it to our readers.

Chicot, a man of ingenious imagination, as we all know, had hollowed the main beam which crossed his house from end to end, contributing at the same time to ornament, for it was painted of different colors, and to solidity, for it was at least eighteen inches thick.

In this beam he had made a cavity a foot and a half long, and six inches in width, which he used as a strong box and which contained one thousand crowns in gold.

But here is the calculation made by Chicot.

"I spend," he said, "the twentieth part of one of these crowns every day; I have, therefore, enough to support me for twenty thousand days. I shall not live so long, but I may, possibly, live half that time: and as I grow older, my wants, and consequently my expenses, will increase, for our comfort should progress in proportion to the diminution of our days. This will provide for twenty-five or thirty good years. Come, thank God, it is quite enough."

Chicot, therefore, by the calculation we have just made with him, found himself one of the richest men of Paris, and this tranquillity as to the future produced in him a sort of pride.

Not that Chicot was avaricious; for a long time he had been prodigal, but poverty inspired him with horror, for he knew that it falls on the shoulders like a leaden cloak, and that it bends the stoutest heart.

This morning, on opening his chest to complete his accounts with himself, he said:

"*Ventre de biche!* the present century is a hard one, and the times are not liberal. I need have no delicacy with Henry. These thousand crowns of gold do not even come from him, but from an uncle who had promised me six times as much. It is true that this uncle was a bachelor. If it were still dark, I would go and take a hundred

crowns from the king's pocket ; but it is daylight, and I have no resources but in myself and in Gorenflot."

This idea of drawing the money from Gorenflot made his worthy friend smile.

"It would be odd," he continued, "if Maitre Gorenflot should refuse a hundred crowns for the king's service, to the friend through whom he was appointed prior to the Jacobins.

"Ah!" he continued, shaking his head, "he is Gorenflot no longer.

"Yes, but Robert Briquet is still Chicot.

"But this letter of the king, this famous epistle intended to set the court of Navarre in a blaze, I ought to have gone for it before dawn, and here it is daylight. Bah! I shall find a way, and if necessary, I will strike a terrible blow on Gorenflot's skull if I find his brains too thick to persuade.

"*En route*, then."

Chicot adjusted the plank which concealed his hiding-place, secured it with four nails, covered it with the flagstone, upon which he sprinkled some dust to fill up the joints, and then, ready to start, he threw a last glance round the little room in which, for so many days, he had been safe and inaccessible, like the heart in the breast.

He then glanced at the house opposite.

"These devils of Joyeuses are quite capable of burning my house down some night, to attract the lady to her window. Eh! eh! but if they burn my house, they will at the same time make an ingot of my thousand crowns. Really, I think it would be better to hide them in the ground. However, if the Joyeuses burn my house, the king will pay me for it."

Thus reassured, Chicot closed the door, and carried away the key; and as he left to go to the river bank:

"Eh! eh!" he said to himself, "this Nicholas Poulain is very likely to come here, thinking my absence suspi-

cious, and—why this morning my ideas are running wild. *En route, en route.*”

As Chicot closed the street door with no less care than he had closed the door of his chamber, he saw, at the window, the unknown lady’s servant, who was breathing some fresh air, hoping, no doubt, at so early an hour, to be unobserved.

This man, as we have already said, was completely disfigured by a scar extending from the left temple over a portion of the cheek. One of his eyebrows, also, displaced by the violence of the blow, almost entirely concealed the left eye, sunk deeply into its orbit.

It was a strange thing, but with this bald head and gray beard, his eye was bright, and the cheek that was spared had almost the freshness of youth.

At the sight of Robert Briquet descending his door-steps, he drew his hood over his head. He made a movement to go in, but Chicot made a sign for him to remain.

“Neighbor,” said Chicot, “the noise here last night has disgusted me with my house. I am going for a few weeks to my farm; will you be so obliging as to give a look this way, now and then?”

“Yes, monsieur,” replied the unknown, “very willingly.”

“And if you see any thieves——”

“I have a good musket, monsieur, be perfectly easy.”

“Thank you. But I have another favor to ask of you, neighbor.”

“Speak, I am listening.”

Chicot appeared to be measuring, with his eye, the distance which separated him from the speaker.

“It is rather a delicate matter to call out at such a distance,” he said.

“I will come down, then,” replied the stranger.

In fact, Chicot saw him disappear, and as, during this disappearance, he had approached the house, he heard his

steps drawing near, then the door opened, and they found themselves face to face.

This time, the attendant had completely enveloped his face in his hood.

"It is very cold this morning," he said, to conceal or excuse this mysterious precaution.

"A cutting wind, neighbor," replied Chicot, affecting not to look at the man, in order to put him more at ease.

"I am listening, monsieur."

"I am going——" said Chicot.

"You have already done me the honor of telling me so."

"I remember it perfectly; but I leave money in my house."

"So much the worse, monsieur; so much the worse, monsieur; take it with you."

"No, the man is heavier, and less resolute, when he seeks to save his purse at the same time as his life. I therefore leave the money here, well concealed, however; so well hidden, in fact, that I have no reason to fear anything save fire. If that should happen to me, will you be kind enough, neighbor, to watch the burning of a certain large beam the end of which you see there, on the right, cut into the shape of a water-spout; watch it, and search among the cinders."

"Really, monsieur," said the unknown, with evident discontent, "you greatly embarrass me. This confidence would have been far better made to a friend than to a stranger, of whom you know nothing."

As he said these words, his brilliant eye examined Chicot's countenance.

"It is true," replied the latter, "I do not know you, but I have faith in faces, and I think yours is that of an honest man."

"But see, monsieur, what a responsibility for me. It is possible that this music may annoy my mistress as well as yourself, and that we may move away."

"Well!" replied Chicot, "in that case there is an end to it, and I must take my chances."

"Thank you for the confidence you place in a poor stranger," said the attendant, bowing; "I shall endeavor to show myself worthy of it."

And saluting Chicot, he retired within his house.

Chicot, on his part, made him a friendly bow.

And seeing the door closed upon him:

"Poor young man," he murmured, "this time it is a real phantom, and yet I have seen him so gay, so bright, so handsome!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRIORY OF THE JACOBINS.

THE priory which the king had bestowed upon Gorenflot in recompense for his loyal services, and especially in recognition of his brilliant oratory, was situated about two hundred yards on the other side of the Porte Sainte Antoine.

At this period it was a well frequented neighborhood, the king making repeated visits to the Château of Vincennes, which was still called the forest of Vincennes.

Here and there, on the road to the Donjon, some noblemen had built small residences, with pretty gardens and magnificent courts, forming a sort of appendage to the château, and many a rendezvous was given there from which, despite the mania which the smallest bourgeois possessed of busying himself about state affairs, we make bold to say that politics were most carefully excluded.

The result of this continual passing to and fro of the court was that the road rose to the importance which the Champs Elysées now enjoy.

It was a fine position for the priory, which towered proudly on the right of the road of Vincennes.

This priory was composed of a square building, enclosing an enormous court, planted with trees; it had a kitchen garden behind, and a number of outhouses which made it look like a small village.

Two hundred Jacobin monks occupied the dormitories placed at the end of the court, parallel with the road.

In front, four handsome windows, with a single iron balcony running the whole length of the four windows, gave to the apartments of the priory, air, light and life.

Like a city, prepared to be besieged some day, the priory found all its resources in the tributary territories of Montreuil, Charonne, and Saint Mandé. Its pasture-lands fed a troop of fifty oxen and ninety-nine sheep, for by some traditional law, no religious order was allowed to possess one hundred of anything.

A private palace also sheltered ninety-nine pigs, of a particular breed, which were under the immediate superintendence of a pork butcher, chosen by Dom Modeste himself.

For this honorable choice the pork butcher was indebted to the exquisite sausage, stuffed ears, and black puddings, *a la ciboulette*, which he once furnished to the inn of the Corne d'Abondance. Dom Modeste, acknowledging the pleasant repasts he had formerly made at the house of Maître Bonhomme thus discharged the debts of Brother Gorenflot.

It is unnecessary to speak of the store-rooms and the cellar. The espaliers of fruit trees exposed to the morning sun, produced incomparable peaches, apricots, and figs, and in addition, preserves of fruit and sugared pasties were perfected by a certain Brother Eusebe, author of the famous rock constructed of confectionery which the Hôtel de Ville, of Paris, offered to the two queens at the last state banquet which had taken place there.

As to the cellar, Gorenflot had furnished it himself, by

emptying those of Burgundy, for he had that innate predilection of all real wine-bibbers, who pretend that Burgundy wine is the only true wine.

In the interior of this paradise of idlers and gourmands, in the sumptuous apartment of the first floor, the balcony of which overlooked the high-road, we shall find Gorenflot, ornamented with an extra chin, and characterized by that sort of venerable gravity which the constant habit of repose and comfort gives to the most vulgar faces.

In his robe, white as milk, and his black cape, which warms his wide shoulders, Gorenflot has no longer the freedom of movement, enjoyed under his gray robe of a simple monk, but he has more majesty.

His hand, as thick as a leg of mutton, rests upon a quarto, which it completely covers, his two large feet almost crush his foot-stove under them, and his arms have not length enough to make the circuit of his stomach.

Half-past seven in the morning had just struck. The prior had risen last, profiting by the rule which gives to the head one hour's sleep more than to the other friars, and now he was quietly continuing his sleep in a great arm-chair with wings, and soft as eider-down.

The furniture of the room in which the worthy abbé was asleep was more mundane than religious : a carved table, covered with a rich cloth ; pictures of religious gallantry—a singular combination of love and devotion which is only to be found in the art of that period ; precious vases for the church or table on the shelves ; at the windows massive curtains of Venetian brocade, more splendid in their antiquity than the most expensive modern stuffs. This is the detail of the riches, of which Dom Modeste Gorenflot had become the possessor, and this by the grace of God, of the king, and more especially of Chicot.

The prior slept, as we have said, in his chair, while the day came to pay him its accustomed visit, and caressed, with its silver rays, the crimson and pearly hues of the sleeper's countenance.

The door of the chamber gently opened, and two monks entered, without awaking the prior.

The first was a man of thirty or thirty-five years of age, thin, pale, and nervously slender in his monastic robes. He carried his head high; his look, as piercing as the glance from a falcon's eye commanded even before he spoke; and yet his eyes were softened by the play of the two long white eyelids, which, on closing, discovered the large discolored circle with which they were surrounded.

But when, on the contrary, sparkled this black eye between the thick eyebrows and the yellow ground of the orbit, it was as the lightning which flashes from the shock of two copper clouds.

This monk was Brother Borromée; he had been for the last three weeks treasurer of the convent.

The other was a young man of seventeen or eighteen, with black piercing eyes, a bold look, swelling chin, short, but well made, and who, having turned back his long sleeves, displayed, with a sort of pride, two strong arms quick in gesticulation.

"The prior still sleeps," said the youngest of the two friars to the other, "shall we awaken him?"

"On no account, Brother Jacques," replied the treasurer.

"Really, it is a pity to have a prior who sleeps so long," said the young brother, "for we might have tried the arms this morning. Did you notice what superb cuirasses and arquebuses there are among the number?"

"Silence, brother, you will be heard."

"What a misfortune!" continued the young friar, stamping with his foot, the sound of which was muffled by the thick carpet, "what a misfortune! It is so fine to-day, the court is so dry, what fine exercises we could have, brother treasurer!"

"We must wait, my child," said Frère Borromée, with a feigned submission, which the fire of his glance contradicted.

"Why do you not order them to distribute the arms?" impetuously replied Jacques, tucking up the sleeves which had fallen down.

"I order?"

"Yes, you."

"You know that I do not command, brother," replied Borromée, with compunction, "there is the master."

"In that chair—asleep—when every one else is awake!" said Jacques, in a tone less respectful than impatient—"the master?"

And a look of sublime intelligence seemed to penetrate to the very soul of Brother Borromée.

"Let us respect his rank and his sleep," said the latter, advancing to the middle of the room, and that so awkwardly, that he overturned a stool, on the carpet.

Although the carpet had softened the noise of the fall as it had that of brother Jacques' heel, Dom Modeste awoke with a start.

"Who is there?" he exclaimed, in the trembling voice of a sleeping sentinel.

"My lord prior," said Brother Borromée, "pardon us if we interrupt your pious meditation, but I have come to take your orders."

"Ah! good-morning, Brother Borromée," said Gorenflot, with a slight nod of the head.

And after a moment's reflection, during which it was evident that he was stretching every chord of his memory:

"What orders?" he inquired, blinking three or four times.

"About the arms and armor."

"The arms and armor?" demanded Gorenflot.

"Without doubt; your lordship ordered arms and armor to be brought here."

"To whom was the order given?"

"To me."

"To you? I commanded arms?"

"Without the least doubt, my lord prior," said Borromée, in a firm and steady voice.

"I!" repeated Dom Modeste, filled with astonishment; "I! when?"

"A week ago."

"Ah! if it was a week ago——But for what purpose?"

"Your reverence said to me,—and I repeat your own words,—you said to me, 'Brother Borromée, it would be wise to procure arms, for the use of the brethren; gymnastic exercises develop the strength of the body, as pious exhortations develop that of the soul.'"

"I said that?" said Gorenflot.

"Yes, reverend prior, and I, unworthy and obedient brother, hastened to obey your orders, and have procured arms."

"It is strange," murmured Gorenflot; "but I remember nothing of all this."

"You even added, reverend prior, this Latin maxim: *militat spiritu, militat gladio.*"

"Oh!" exclaimed Dom Modeste, opening wide his eyes, "I added the maxim?"

"I have a faithful memory, reverend prior," replied Borromée, modestly lowering his eyes.

"Well, if I said so," replied Gorenflot, mildly nodding his head, "I had my reason for doing so, Brother Borromée. Indeed, it has always been my opinion that the body should be exercised, and when I was a simple friar, I fought with the word, and also with the sword. *Militat—spiritus.* Very well, Brother Borromée, it was an inspiration from the Almighty."

"Then I will finish executing your orders, reverend prior," said Borromée, retiring with Brother Jacques, who, trembling with joy, drew him by the end of his robe.

"Go," said Gorenflot, majestically.

"Ah!" said Borromée, entering a few seconds after his disappearance, "I forgot."

"What?"

"There is a friend in the parlor who asks to see your reverence."

"What is his name?"

"Maître Robert Briquet."

"Maître Robert Briquet," repeated Gorenflot; "he is no friend, Brother Borromée; he is merely an acquaintance."

"Then your reverence will not receive him?"

"Yes, yes," said Gorenflot, coolly; "the man amuses me. Show him up."

Brother Borromée bowed a second time and left. As to Brother Jacques, he had made but one bound from the prior's apartment to the room in which the arms were deposited.

Five minutes later, the door opened, and Chicot appeared.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

DOM MODESTE did not change the comfortably reclining position he had taken. Chicot crossed the chamber to reach him.

But the prior mildly bent his head, to indicate to the new-comer that he was seen. Chicot did not appear astonished at the prior's indifference; he continued to advance, and on reaching a respectful distance, he bowed to him.

"Good-morning," he said.

"Ah! there you are," said Gorenflot; "you have come to life again, it appears?"

"Did you think me dead?"

"Of course! you were no longer to be seen."

"I had business."

"Ah!"

Chicot knew that unless warmed by two or three bottles of old Burgundy, Gorenflot was sparing of his words. But as in all probability, seeing the early hour of the morning, Gorenflot was still fasting, he took a comfortable chair, and silently settled himself in the chimney-corner, stretching his feet on the andirons and resting his loins on the back of the easy-chair.

"Will you breakfast with me, Monsieur Briquet?" inquired Dom Modeste.

"Perhaps, lord prior."

"You must not be angry with me, Monsieur Briquet, if I find it impossible to give you as much time as I should wish."

"And who the devil asked you for your time? *Ventre de biche!* I did not even ask to breakfast with you; you offered it."

"Assuredly, Monsieur Briquet," said Dom Modeste, with an uneasiness which Chicot's firm tone justified. "Certainly I offered it, but——"

"But you thought I should not accept?"

"Oh, no. Is it my habit to be artful, say, Monsieur Briquet?"

"Ah! a superior man like you can adopt any habits, Monsieur the Prior," replied Chicot, with one of those smiles which belonged to him alone.

Dom Modeste gazed at Chicot with blinking eyes. It was impossible to guess whether Chicot was laughing at him or speaking seriously. Chicot rose.

"Why do you rise, Monsieur Briquet?" demanded Gorenflot.

"Because I am going."

"And why are you going, when you said you would breakfast with me?"

"In the first place, I did not say I would breakfast with you."

"Pardon me, I invited you!"

"And I replied, 'Perhaps'; perhaps does not mean yes."

"You are angry?"

Chicot laughed.

"I, angry!" he said; "and why should I be angry? because you are impudent, ignorant, and rude? Oh! my dear lord prior, I have known you too long to be angry at your little imperfections."

Gorenflot, astounded by that naïve sally on the part of his guest, remained with his mouth open and arms extended.

"Adieu," said Chicot.

"Oh! do not go."

"My journey cannot be delayed."

"You travel?"

"I have a mission."

"And from whom?"

"From the king."

Gorenflot fell deeper and deeper in wonder and astonishment.

"A mission," he said, "a mission from the king; then you have again seen him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And how did he receive you?"

"With enthusiasm; he has a memory, king as he is."

"A mission from the king," muttered Gorenflot, "and I impudent, ignorant, and rude."

His heart collapsed by degrees like a balloon that has lost its wind by the piercing of a needle.

"Adieu," repeated Chicot.

Gorenflot rose from his chair, and with his large hand arrested the fugitive, who, we confess, allowed himself to be easily held.

"Come, let us explain," said the prior.

"On what?" demanded Chicot.

"On your irritability to-day."

"I! I am the same to-day as on all other days."

"No."

"A simple mirror of the people I am with."

"No."

"You laugh, I laugh; you are rude, so am I."

"No, no, no!"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Well! come, I confess it, I was preoccupied."

"Really?"

"Will you not be indulgent to a man who has so much work on his shoulders? Is my head my own, *mon Dieu*! Governing this priory is like governing a province. Imagine, then, that I command two hundred men, that I am at the same time steward, architect, intendant, and all this without including my spiritual duties."

"Oh! 'tis too much indeed for an unworthy servant of God."

"Oh! that is ironical," said Gorenflot; "Monsieur Briquet, have you lost your Christian charity?"

"I had some, then?"

"I also think that you are somewhat envious; take care, envy is a capital sin."

"I am envious? And what can I envy? I ask you."

"Hum! you say to yourself, 'Dom Modeste Gorenflot is rising, he is on the ascending grade.'"

"While I am on the descending grade, I suppose?" replied Chicot, ironically.

"It is the misfortune of your false position, Monsieur Briquet."

"Monsieur Gorenflot, remember the text of the Gospel."

"What text?"

"He who exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Gorenflot.

"And now he doubts the Holy Scriptures, the heretic!" exclaimed Chicot clasping his two hands.

"Heretic!" repeated Gorenflot, "it is the Huguenots who are heretics."

"Schismatic, then."

"Come, what do you mean, Monsieur Briquet? Really you bewilder me."

"Nothing, except that I am going on a journey, and that I have come to bid you farewell. So, good-bye, Seigneur Dom Modeste."

"You do not leave me thus?"

"Yes, *pardieu!*"

"You!"

"Yes, I."

"A friend?"

"In prosperity one has no friends."

"Chicot!"

"I am no longer Chicot, you reproached me with it just now."

"I, when?"

"When you spoke of my false position."

"Reproached! Ah! what words you use to-day."

The prior bent his large head, and his three chins smoothed into one, rested on his bull's neck.

Chicot observed him from the corner of his eye; he saw him turn slightly pale.

"Good-bye, bear me no ill-will for the truths I have told you."

And he made a movement to go.

"Tell me what you like, Monsieur Chicot," said Dom Modeste, "but have no more of such looks for me."

"Ah! ah! it is rather late."

"Never too late! eh! stay, we do not part without eating; the devil! it is not good for the health,—you have told me so twenty times! Well! let us breakfast."

Chicot had decided to conquer all his advantages at one blow.

"No!" said he, "the living is not good here."

Gorenflot had supported the former attacks with courage: under this he gave way.

"The living is bad here!" he stammered out, in astonishment.

"It is my opinion," said Chicot.

"You had to complain of your last dinner here?"

"The horrible flavor is still in my mouth. Phew!"

"You said phew," said Gorenflot, raising his hands to heaven.

"Yes," said Chicot, resolutely, "I said phew."

"Of what? speak."

"The pork cutlets were disgracefully burned."

"Oh!"

"The stuffed ears did not crackle under your teeth."

"Oh!"

"The capon with rice was watery."

"Good heavens!"

"The fat was not taken off the soup."

"*Miséricorde!*"

"The gravy was covered with oil which yet floats in my stomach."

"Chicot, Chicot," sighed Dom Modeste, in the same tone in which Cæsar, expiring, said to his assassin, "Brutus, Brutus!"

"Besides, you have no time to give me."

"I?"

"You told me you were busy; did you not tell me so, yes or no? It only remains for you to turn liar."

"Well! this business can be deferred. It is only a lady who asks me to see her, nothing more."

"Receive her, then."

"No! no! dear Monsieur Chicot! although she has sent me a hundred bottles of Sicilian wine."

"A hundred bottles of Sicilian wine!"

"I shall not receive her, though she is probably some great lady; I shall not receive her; I will receive only you, dear Monsieur Chicot. This great lady wishes to become my penitent, and sends bottles of Sicilian wine by the hundred. Well! if you exact it I shall refuse her my spiritual advice. I will send her word to choose another director."

"And you will do all this?"

"To breakfast with you, dear Monsieur Chicot, to repair my wrongs towards you."

"Your wrongs spring from your savage pride, Dom Modeste."

"I will humble myself, my friend."

"From your insolent idleness."

"Chicot, Chicot, from to-day, I will mortify myself, by joining my monks in their exercise."

"Your monks in their exercise," said Chicot, opening his eyes; "and what exercise, that of the knife and fork?"

"No; of arms."

"The exercise of arms?"

"Yes; but it will be fatiguing to command."

"You command the Jacobins in their exercise?"

"I am going to command them, at any rate."

"From to-morrow?"

"From to-day, if you require it."

"And who had the idea of making monks do their exercise?"

"I, it seems," said Gorenflot.

"You! impossible."

"Yes, I gave the order to Brother Borromée."

"Who is Brother Borromée?"

"Ah! true, you do not know him."

"What is he?"

"He is the treasurer."

"How is it you have a treasurer that I do not know, you rascal?"

"He came since your last visit."

"And from whence comes your treasurer?"

"M. the Cardinal de Guise recommended him."

"In person?"

"By letter, dear Monsieur Chicot, by letter."

"Was it that hawk's face I saw below?"

"The same."

"Who announced me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, oh!" said Chicot, involuntarily; "and what virtues has this treasurer, so warmly supported by M. the Cardinal de Guise?"

"He reckons like Pythagoras."

"And it is with him you decided on these exercises of arms?"

"Yes, my friend."

"That is to say he proposed to you to arm your monks, did he not?"

"No, dear Monsieur Chicot, the idea was my own, entirely my own!"

"And with what object?"

"With the intention of arming them."

"No pride, hardened sinner, pride is a capital sin; the idea did not originate with you."

"With him or me, I do not exactly know who first thought of it: no, no, positively, I did. It even appears that upon this occasion I pronounced a very judicious and brilliant Latin text."

Chicot drew near the prior.

"A Latin text, you, my dear prior?" said Chicot; "and can you remember this Latin text?"

"*Militat spiritu.*"

"*Militat spiritu, militat gladio.*"

"That's it, that's it," cried Dom Modeste, with enthusiasm.

"Come, come," said Chicot, "it is impossible to excuse one's self with better grace than you have done; I pardon you."

"Oh!" said Gorenflot, meltingly.

"You are still my friend, my true friend."

Gorenflot attempted a tear.

"But let us breakfast, and I shall be indulgent for the breakfast."

"Listen," said Gorenflot, with warmth; "I will send

word to our brother, the cook, that if the cheer is not royal, I will have him put in the dungeon."

"Do so, do so," said Chicot; "you are the master, my dear prior."

"And we will uncork some of your fair penitent's wine."

"I will assist you with my advice."

"Let me embrace you, Chicot!"

"Don't stifle me, and let us talk."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BREAKFAST.

GORENFLOT was not long in giving his orders. If the worthy prior was really on the ascending grade, as he pretended, it was especially in that which concerned the details of a repast, and the progress of the culinary science.

Dom Modeste summoned Brother Eusebius, who appeared, not before his chief, but before his judge. From the manner in which he had been commanded, he surmised that something extraordinary was about to take place.

"Brother Eusebius," said Gorenflot, in a severe tone. "listen to what M. Robert Briquet is about to tell you! it seems you are negligent. I have heard of serious charges against your last bisques, and a fatal negligence in the crackling of your ears. Take care, brother, take care; a single step in the wrong path drags in the whole body."

The monk turned red and white by turns, and stammered out an excuse, which was not admitted.

"Enough!" said Gorenflot.

Brother Eusebius was silent.

"What have you to-day for breakfast?" demanded the reverend prior.

"I shall have some eggs, fried with cocks' combs."

"What next?"

"Stuffed mushrooms."

"What next?"

"Craw-fish, cooked with madeira."

"Small fry, all this, small fry, something to lay a foundation; come—quick!"

"I shall have, besides, a ham boiled with pistachios."

"*Hueh!*" said Chicot.

"Pardon me," timidly interrupted Brother Eusebius; "it is cooked in extra dry sherry. I placed it, with some tender beef pickled in oil from Aix, so that, with the fat of the beef, you eat the lean of the ham—and with the fat of the ham, the lean of the beef."

Gorenflot hazarded towards Chicot a look, accompanied by a gesture of approbation.

"Good, that; is it not, Monsieur Robert?" he said.

Chicot made a sign of half satisfaction.

"And what next have you?"

"We can dish you up an eel in a minute."

"No eels," said Chicot.

"I think, Monsieur Briquet," replied Brother Eusebius, emboldened by degrees, "I think you might taste my eels without regretting it."

"Are they rare ones, your eels?"

"I feed them in a particular manner."

"Oh! oh!"

"Yes," added Gorenflot; "it appears that the Romans or the Greeks, I am not sure which—a people of Italy in short—fed the lampreys as Eusebius does his eels. He read this in an ancient author called Suetonius who wrote upon cookery."

"What, Brother Eusebius," exclaimed Chicot; "you feed your eels upon men?"

"No, monsieur; I mince the intestines and livers of game and other birds; I add a little pork, I make of all this a sort of sausage meat, which I throw to my eels.

These I keep in fresh and sweet water, running over a fine gravel ; they become fat in a month, and, while fattening, grow considerably longer. The one I shall offer to the lord prior to-day, for example, weighs nine pounds."

"It must be a serpent," said Chicot.

"It swallowed, at a gulp, a chicken six days old."

"And how did you cook it?" demanded Chicot.

"Yes, how did you cook it?" repeated the prior.

"Skinned, fried, rubbed with anchovy, rolled in some fine bread-crumbs, then replaced on the gridiron for ten seconds ; after which, I shall have the honor of serving it, swimming in a spiced sauce of pepper and garlic."

"But the sauce?"

"Yes ; the sauce itself?"

"Plain sauce of oil from Aix, whipped up with citrons and mustard."

"Perfect," said Chicot.

Brother Eusebius breathed once more.

"Then we must have sweets," judiciously observed Gorenflot.

"I shall invent some dishes capable of pleasing the revered prior."

"Very well ; I shall leave it to you," said Gorenflot. "Show yourself worthy of my confidence."

Eusebius bowed.

"I may retire, then?" he said.

The prior consulted Chicot.

"Let him retire," said Chicot.

"Retire, and send our brother, the butler, to me."

Eusebius bowed, and retired.

The butler succeeded Brother Eusebius, and received orders not less precise and not less detailed.

Ten minutes later, before the table, covered with a fine cloth, the two guests, buried in two large arm-chairs with cushions, were seated opposite each other, knife and fork in hand, like two duellists.

The table, large enough for six persons, was filled, how-

ever, so well had the butler accumulated the bottles of different shapes and brands.

Eusebius, faithful to the programme, sent the boiled eggs, the crawfish, and mushrooms, which perfumed the air with a soft odor of truffles, butter fresh as cream, thyme, and Madeira wine.

Chicot set to, like a hungry man; the prior, on the contrary, like a man who mistrusts himself, his cook, and his guest.

But after a few minutes, it was Gorenflot who devoured, whilst Chicot observed.

They began with Rhennish wine; they then passed to Burgundy of 1550; they made an excursion to an hermitage of which they had forgotten the date; they tasted the Saint Perrey; and at length they passed to the wine of the fair penitent.

"What do you think of it?" demanded Gorenflot, after tasting three times without daring to pronounce.

"Velvety, but light," said Chicot; "and what is the name of your penitent?"

"I do not know."

"What! you do not know her name?"

"No, we treat through ambassadors."

Chicot made a pause, during which he gently closed his eyes as if to enjoy a sip of wine, which he retained in his mouth before swallowing, but in reality it was to reflect.

"And so," he said, in about five minutes, "I have the honor of breakfasting opposite an army general?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu*, yes!"

"What! you sigh in saying this?"

"Ah! it is truly very fatiguing."

"No doubt, but it is honorable, it is grand!"

"Superb! only that there is no longer silence in the refectory; and the day before yesterday, I was obliged to suppress a dish at supper."

"Suppress a dish! and why so?"

"Because several of my best soldiers, I must confess it, had the audacity to find insufficient the dish of *raisiné de Bourgogne* which they have every third Friday."

"Only think! insufficient! and what reason did they give for this insufficiency?"

"They pretended they were still hungry, and demanded some light food, such as veal, lobster, or good fish. Can you understand these cormorants?"

"Well! if they take great exercise, it is not astonishing that these monks are hungry."

"Where will the merit be?" said Dom Modeste; "live well and work well, is what every one can do. The devil! we must learn to offer privations to the Almighty," continued the worthy abbé, piling a quarter of the ham and beef on his fork, already respectably provided with gelatine, of which Brother Eusebius had not spoken, the dish being too simple to be mentioned but not too simple to be served.

"Drink, Modeste, drink," said Chicot; "you will choke my dear friend, you are turning crimson."

"It is with indignation," replied the prior, emptying his glass, which held half a pint.

Chicot allowed him to do it, and when Gorenflot had replaced his glass on the table——

"Come," said Chicot, "finish your story, it interests me greatly, on my word of honor. You deprived them of a dish because they found they had not enough to eat?"

"Just so."

"Very ingenious."

"So that the punishment had a powerful effect. I thought they would have revolted; their eyes sparkled, their teeth chattered."

"They were hungry," said Chicot; "*ventre de biche!* it is very natural!"

"They were hungry, eh?"

"Undoubtedly."

"You say so, you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well, I observed a strange fact that evening, and I have recommended it to the analysis of scientists. I had Brother Borromée called, charging him with my instructions touching this deprivation of a dish, to which I added, deprivation of wine, on account of the rebellion."

"What then?" said Chicot.

"At length, to crown the work, I commanded a fresh exercise, resolved to crush the hydra of revolt; the psalms say this, you know; listen: *Cabis poriabis diagonem*: eh! you know that, *mordieu*!"

"*Proculcabis draconem*," said Chicot, helping the prior to wine.

"*Draconem*, that's it, bravo! Apropos of a dragon, eat some of that eel, it makes the mouth water; it is marvellous!"

"Thank you, I cannot breathe, but continue."

"What!"

"Your strange fact."

"Which? I do not remember."

"The one you recommended to the scientists."

"Ah, yes! I have it, well."

"I am listening."

"I prescribed an exercise for the evening; I expected to see my men thin, pale, and feverish, and I had prepared a very good sermon on this text: 'He who eats my bread.'"

"Dry bread," said Chicot.

"Precisely, dry bread," exclaimed Gorenflot, distending with a Cyclopean laugh, his heavy jaws; "I should have played upon the word, and I had previously laughed at it for a whole hour, when I found myself in the middle of a court, in presence of a troop of fellows animated, nervous, hopping about like grasshoppers: and this is the illusion upon which I should wish to consult the scientists."

"Let us see the illusion."

"Smelling of wine a mile off——"

"Wine! Then Brother Borromée betrayed you."

"Oh! I am sure of Borromée," exclaimed Gorenflot; "he is passive obedience personified; if I were to tell Brother Borromée to roast himself slowly, he would instantly prepare the gridiron, and heat the fagots."

"This is the misfortune of being a poor physiognomist," said Chicot, scratching his nose; "he does not at all produce that effect upon me."

"It is possible, but I know my Borromée, as I know you, my dear Chicot," said Dom Modeste, who was getting sentimental, while getting drunk.

"And you say they smelt of wine?"

"Borromée?"

"No, your monks."

"Like wine casks, to say nothing of their being as red as lobsters; I made the observation to Borromée."

"Bravo!"

"Ah! I am not to be caught napping."

"And what did he reply?"

"Listen; it was very subtle."

"I believe it."

"He replied that the effect of a very sharp appetite is similar to that of satisfied desires."

"Oh, oh!" said Chicot: "it is indeed very subtle, as you observe. *Ventre de biche!* your Borromée is a strong man; I am no longer astonished that his lips and nose are thin. And this convinced you?"

"Completely, and you shall be convinced of it yourself; but come a little nearer to me, for I no longer move without giddiness."

Chicot approached; Gorenflot made of his large hand a speaking trumpet which he applied to Chicot's ear.

"Well?" said Chicot.

"Wait, then, I resume. Do you remember the time when we were young, Chicot?"

"I remember it."

"The time when the blood boiled, when immodest desires——?"

"Prior, prior!" said the chaste Chicot.

"'Tis Borromée who is speaking, and I maintain that he is right; does not appetite produce at times the illusions of reality?"

Chicot began laughing so heartily that the table, with all the bottles, shook like the deck of a ship.

"Good, good," he said, "I will put myself at school to Brother Borromée, and when he has well initiated me into his theories, I shall ask a favor of you, reverend prior."

"And it shall be granted you, Chicot, as well as all you may ask of your friend. Now, speak, what is this favor?"

"You shall give me the stewardship of the priory for a week?"

"And what will you do in this week?"

"I will feed Borromée on his theories, I will give him a plate and an empty glass, and say to him, 'Desire with all the force of your hunger and your thirst a turkey with mushrooms, and a bottle of Chambertin, but take care not to get drunk on the Chambertin; take care you don't have an indigestion with the turkey, dear brother philosopher.'"

"And so you do not believe in appetite, heathen?"

"Enough! enough! I believe what I believe; but a truce to theories."

"Be it so," said Gorenflot; "let us speak a little of reality?"

And Gorenflot helped himself to a full glass.

"Let us drink to the good times you spoke of just now, Chicot," he said, "our suppers at the Corne d'Abondance."

"Bravo, I thought you had forgotten all that, reverend prior."

"No, all that sleeps under the majesty of my position, but *morbleu*! I am still the same."

And Gorenflot commenced humming his favorite song, despite Chicot's efforts to make him stop.

“ Quand l'anon est deslaché
 Quand le vin est débouché
 L'anon dresse son oreille
 Le vin sort de la bouteille.
 Mais rien n'est si eventé
 Que le moine en pleine treille ;
 Mais rien n'est si desbaté
 Que le moine en libertie.”*

“Hush, man,” said Chicot, “if Borromée should enter, he would think you had neither eaten nor drunk for a week.”

“If Brother Borromée were to enter he would join me in the chorus.”

“I do not believe it.”

“And I tell you——”

“To hold your tongue, and reply to my questions.”

“Speak, then.”

“You don't give me time, drunkard.”

“Oh! drunkard! I!”

“Well, it results from this drilling that your convent is transformed into a barrack.”

“Yes, my friend, that is the word, a real barrack; last Thursday, was it Thursday? yes, it was Thursday. Stay, I scarcely know if it was Thursday.”

“Thursday or Friday, the date is of no consequence.”

“Very true, the fact is everything, is it not? well! Thursday or Friday, in the corridor, I found two novices

* “When the colt is unloosed,
 When the wine is uncorked,
 The colt raises his head,
 The wine sparkles up,
 But nothing's so flat
 As the monk in his frock;
 And nought has more glee
 Than the monk when he's free.”

who were fighting with the sword, and their two seconds who were also preparing to have a bout together."

"And what did you do?"

"I sent for a whip to flog the novices, who fled, but Borromée——"

"Ah, ah! Borromée—Borromée again."

"Always."

"But Borromée?"

"Borromée caught them again, and scourged them in such a fashion that they are still in bed, the wretches."

"I demand to see their shoulders, to appreciate the strength of Brother Borromée's muscles," said Chicot.

"Disturb ourselves to look at other shoulders than shoulders of mutton, never! Eat some apricot tart."

"No, *morbleu!* I shall choke."

"Drink, then."

"No, I must walk."

"Well, don't you think I have to walk? and yet I drink."

"Oh, with you it is different; and besides, to give the commands, one must have stout lungs."

"Well, a glass, then, only one glass, of this digestive liqueur, of which Eusebius alone has the secret."

"Agreed."

"It is so efficacious that if you had dined like a glutton, you would be hungry two hours after dinner."

"What a receipt for the poor! Do you know if I were a king, I would have beheaded Eusebius. His liqueur is capable of starving a whole kingdom. Oh! oh! what is that?"

"It is the exercise which is beginning," said Gorenflot.

In fact, a great noise, a clash of voices and weapons was heard coming from the court.

"Without the chief?" said Chicot. "Oh! oh! these soldiers are badly disciplined I fear."

"Without me! never," said Gorenflot; "besides, that could not be, you understand, since it is I who command,

I who instruct, and stay, as a proof, I hear Brother Borromée, who is coming to take my orders."

At the same moment, Borromée entered, casting at Chicot an oblique glance, as prompt as the traitorous arrow of the Parthian.

"Oh! oh!" thought Chicot, "you were wrong to look at me like that; you have betrayed yourself."

"Reverend Prior," said Borromée, "we only wait for you to inspect arms and cuirasses."

"Cuirasses? oh! oh!" said Chicot to himself, "a moment—I must see this," and he hastily rose.

"You will be present at our manœuvres," said Gorenflot, rising in his turn like a block of marble on legs; "your arm, my friend; you shall see a good lesson."

"The fact is, the reverend prior is a profound tactician," said Borromée, sounding Chicot's imperturbable countenance.

"Dom Modeste is a superior man in everything," replied Chicot, bowing.

Then he said to himself:

"You must play a deep game, my eaglet, or there is a kite who will pluck your feathers."

CHAPTER XXII.

BROTHER BORROMÉE.

WHEN Chicot, assisting the reverend prior, came down the grand staircase into the court of the priory, the spectacle was exactly that of an immense barrack in full activity.

Divided into two bands of one hundred men each, the monks, the halberd, pike, or musket in hand, stood like soldiers awaiting the appearance of their commander.

About fifty among the most zealous and vigorous, had

covered their heads with helmets; long swords were suspended from a belt around their waists. They wanted nothing but a buckler in their hands to resemble the ancient Medes, or turned-up eyes to look like the modern Chinese.

Others proudly displayed rounded cuirasses, which they seemed delighted to strike with an iron gauntlet.

Others, enclosed in armlets and thigh-pieces, exercised themselves in developing their joints, deprived of elasticity by these partial ligaments.

Brother Borromée took a casque from the hands of a novice, and placed it on his own head with the prompt, regular movement of a German trooper or landsknecht.

Whilst he was fixing the loops, Chicot could not help looking at the helmet: and while doing so his lips smiled; as he smiled, he walked round Borromée, admiring him at every point.

He did more, he approached the treasurer, and passed his hand over one of the inequalities of the helmet.

"You have a magnificent helmet there, Brother Borromée," he said; "where did you buy it, my dear prior?"

Gorenflot could not reply, for at this moment they were fastening upon him a splendid cuirass, which although spacious enough to encompass the Farnesian Hercules, painfully confined the luxurious undulations of the worthy prior's flesh.

"Don't buckle so tight, *mordieu!*" exclaimed Gorenflot; "don't squeeze so, I shall be stifled. I shall not be able to speak. Enough! enough!"

"You inquired of the reverend prior, I think," said Borromée, "where he had purchased my helmet?"

"I addressed that question to the reverend prior, and not to you," replied Chicot, "because I presume, that in this convent, as in all others, nothing is done except on the order of the superior."

"Certainly," said Gorenflot, "nothing is done here with-

out my order. What is your question, dear Monsieur Briquet?"

"I ask Brother Borromée if he knows where that helmet was obtained."

"It made part of a lot of armor which the reverend prior purchased yesterday to arm the convent."

"I?" said Gorenflot.

"Yes, do you not remember that they brought several cuirasses and helmets here, according to your reverence's orders?"

"It is true," said Gorenflot.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, "my helmet was much attached to its master; after carrying it myself to the Hôtel de Guise, it comes like a lost dog to find me at the priory of the Jacobins!"

At a sign from Brother Borromée, the lines were regularly formed, and silence reigned throughout the ranks.

Chicot seated himself on a bench, to look on comfortably at the manœuvres.

Gorenflot stood, resting on his legs as on two posts.

"Attention!" said Brother Borromée, in a gentle tone.

Dom Modeste drew a gigantic sword from the scabbard and waving it in the air, he cried in a stentorian voice:

"Attention!"

"Your reverence will fatigue yourself, perhaps, in giving the commands," said Borromée, with gentle remonstrance; "you were suffering this morning, and if it please you to spare your precious health, I will command to-day."

"I do indeed wish it," said Dom Modeste; "in fact I am suffering, choking—go on."

Borromée bowed, and like a man used to these sorts of assents, he placed himself in front of the troop.

"What a complaisant servant!" said Chicot; "that fellow is a pearl."

"He is charming: I told you so," replied Dom Modeste.

"I am sure he does the same thing for you every day," said Chicot.

"Oh! every day—he is as submissive as a slave; I am always reproaching him for his readiness to oblige. Humility is not slavery," added Gorenflot, sententiously.

"So that you have really nothing to do here, and may sleep on both ears; Brother Borromée keeps himself awake in your stead?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* yes."

"That is what I wished to know," said Chicot, whose questions were directed against Borromée alone.

It was wonderful to see the treasurer of the monks erect with warlike pride, his eyes dilated, and his vigorous arm wielding the sword in so skilful a manner that one would have thought him a trained soldier. Every time Brother Borromée uttered a command, Gorenflot repeated it, adding:

"Borromée is right, but I have already told you that—remember my lesson of yesterday. Pass the weapon from one hand to the other—raise the pike—raise it, to the level of the eye; steady. By Saint George! a half turn to the left is exactly the same as a half turn to the right, except that it is just the contrary."

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, "you are a skilful commander."

"Yes, yes," said Gorenflot, caressing his triple chin; "I understand the manœuvres pretty well."

"And you have in Borromée an excellent pupil."

"He understands me," said Gorenflot; "he is very intelligent."

The monks went through the military course, a sort of manœuvre much in vogue at this period, and also exercises with the pike, sword, and musket.

When they came to this last exercise:

"You shall see my little Jacques," said the prior to Chicot.

"Who is your little Jacques?"

"A nice lad, calm-looking, but strong and quick as lightning."

"Ah! really! And where is this charming infant?"

"Wait, wait; I will show him to you: there, yonder, he is holding a musket in his hand, and prepares to fire first."

"And he fires well?"

"Why, at a hundred paces, the fellow would not fail to hit a pistole."

"He ought to serve smartly at mass; but wait a second."

"What then?"

"Why yes, why no."

"You know my little Jacques?"

"I, not the least in the world."

"But you thought you knew him at first?"

"Yes, I fancied I had seen him in a certain church one day, or rather night, when I was shut up in a confessional. But no, I was wrong, it is not he."

This time, we must confess, Chicot's words were not exactly in accordance with truth. Chicot was too good a physiognomist ever to forget features he had once seen.

Meanwhile the object to which the attention of the prior and his friend was directed, little Jacques, as Gorenflot called him, was loading a heavy musket, as long as himself. The musket being loaded he placed himself proudly at a hundred paces from the mark: and there, throwing back his right leg, with military precision, he fired; the ball lodged in the centre of the mark, and this feat was accompanied by the applause of the friars.

"*Tudieu!* well aimed," said Chicot; "and upon my word he is a pretty lad."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Jacques, whose pale cheeks reddened with the flush of pleasure.

"You handle your arms well, my child," said Chicot.

"Well, I am studying, monsieur," said Jacques.

And with these words, putting down his musket after giving this proof of skill, he took a pike from the hand of

his neighbor, and performed a flourish, which Chicot found perfect.

Chicot renewed his compliments.

"He is best at the sword," said Dom Modeste. "Those who understand it, say so ; it is true the scamp has muscles of iron and wrists of steel, and he is practising from morning till night."

"Ah ! let us see that," said Chicot.

"You would try his strength ?" said Borromée.

"I should like to prove it," said Chicot.

"Oh !" continued the treasurer, "there is no one here, except myself, perhaps, capable of fencing with him ; but will you try him yourself, monsieur ?"

"I am but a poor bourgeois," said Chicot, shaking his head ; "formerly, I used my rapier like another, but at present my legs tremble, my arm shakes, and my head is no longer very quick."

"But you practise sometimes, nevertheless ?" said Borromée.

"A little," said Chicot, throwing a glance at Gorenflot ; the latter murmured the name of Nicholas David.

But Borromée did not observe the look ; Borromée did not hear the name, and with a smile of tranquillity, he ordered them to bring the foils and fencing masks.

Jacques, all alive with joy, under his cold and sombre exterior, raised his robe as far as his knee, and fixed his sandal in the sand, as he made his challenge.

"Since, being neither monk nor soldier, it is some time since I have used weapons, will you, Brother Borromée, you who are all muscle and tendon, will you be good enough to give a lesson to Brother Jacques ? will you consent to it, dear prior ?" demanded Chicot of Dom Modeste.

"I order it !" exclaimed the prior, always delighted to give the word.

Borromée drew off his helmet ; Chicot hastened to extend his hands, and the helmet being handed to him, he was once more allowed to prove its identity, and while our

bourgeois accomplished this examination, the treasurer tucked his gown into his belt, and prepared himself.

All the monks came to make a ring round the professor and the pupil.

Gorenflot leant towards his friend :

"It is quite as amusing as chanting vespers, is it not ?" he said, innocently.

"That is what the light horse say," replied Chicot, with the same simplicity.

The two combatants prepared for the trial. Borromée, agile and nervous, had the advantage of height ; he also had that of experience and maturity.

Fire seemed to flash from Jacques' eyes and his cheeks betrayed his excitement by their flushed appearance.

Borromée gradually dropped all appearance of a monk as, foil in hand, carried away by the entrancing action of the trial of skill, he transformed himself into a man-at-arms. He accompanied each thrust with a counsel or a reproach, but the strength, activity, and vigor of Jacques, frequently triumphed over the address of his master, and Brother Borromée was touched several times.

Chicot devoured this spectacle with his eyes, and counted the good thrusts.

When the onset was concluded, or rather when the fencers made a first pause :

"Jacques touched six times," said Chicot ; "Brother Borromée, nine ; that is well for the scholar, but not so well for the master."

A flash, unperceived by all except Chicot, shot from Borromée's eyes, and revealed a fresh trait in his character.

"Good," thought Chicot ; "he is proud."

"Monsieur," replied Borromée, in a voice which with some difficulty he contrived to render calm, "the exercise of arms is very rough for every one, but especially for poor friars like ourselves."

"Nevertheless," said Chicot, determined to push Maître

Borromée to his last refuge; "the master ought not to have less than half the advantage over his pupil."

"Ah! Monsieur Briquet," said Borromée, pale and biting his lips, "you are very absolute, it seems to me."

"Good, he is hot-tempered," thought Chicot, "two mortal sins: they say that one alone is enough to bring a man to perdition; I have a good game." And then, aloud:

"And if Jacques were a little more calm, I am certain he would prove your equal."

"I do not think so," said Borromée.

"Well, for my part, I am sure of it."

"Monsieur Briquet, who can use a weapon," said Brother Borromée, in a bitter tone, "had better try Jacques himself, he would then be able to judge better."

"Oh! I am old," said Chicot.

"Yes, but skilful," said Borromée.

"Ah! you are jesting," thought Briquet; "wait, wait. But," he continued, "there is one thing which deprives my observation of its value."

"Which?"

"I am certain that Brother Borromée, like a kind master, has allowed Jacques to touch out of complaisance."

"Ah, ah!" said Jacques frowning in his turn.

"No, certainly," said Borromée, restraining himself, but exasperated beyond measure; "I love Jacques, but I do not ruin him with that sort of spoiling."

"It is strange," said Chicot, as though talking to himself; "I thought so, excuse me."

"But try your skill, Monsieur Briquet."

"Oh! don't intimidate me," said Chicot.

"Don't be uneasy, monsieur," said Borromée, "we shall be indulgent with you. We know the laws of the church."

"Heathen," muttered Chicot.

"Come, Monsieur Briquet, one pass only."

"Accept," said Gorenflot, "accept."

"I will do you no injury, monsieur," said Jacques, taking the part of his master, and wishing to have a little bout with Chicot; "I have a very light hand."

"Dear child!" murmured Chicot, attaching on the young man an inexpressible glance which ended in a silent smile.

"Come, then," he said, "as all seem to wish it."

"Ah! bravo!" exclaimed the friars, with the appetite of triumph.

"But I warn you," said Chicot, "that I only accept three passes."

"As you like," said Jacques.

And rising slowly from the bench on which he was seated, Chicot tightened his doublet, drew on his fencing gloves, and fastened his mask, with the agility of a tortoise catching flies.

"If this customer contrives to parry your straight thrust," whispered Borromée to Jacques, "I will never fence with you again, I warn you."

Jacques made a sign of the head, accompanied by a smile, that signified, "be easy, master."

Chicot, with the same quietness, and the same circumspection, took his guard, lengthening his great arms and long legs, which by a miracle of precision, he so disposed as to conceal their enormous spring and unusual development.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LESSON.

FENCING was not, at the time of which we are endeavoring not only to narrate the events, but also to describe the manners and habits, what it is at the present day. The swords, sharp on both edges, were used almost as often to strike with the edge as to thrust with the point; besides, the left hand armed with a dagger was at the same time offensive and defensive; the result was a number of wounds or rather scratches, which in the real combat kept up a continual excitement. Quelus, losing his blood from eighteen wounds, still remained on his legs, continued to fight, and would not have fallen, if the nineteenth wound had not laid him on a bed, which he only left for the tomb.

Fencing (introduced from Italy, but still in its infancy) consisted, therefore, at this period, in a number of evolutions in which the actor moved continually, and which on a ground chosen by chance might be frequently impeded by the character of its surface.

It was not rare to see the fencer throw himself forward, draw back again, or jump to the right or left, so that agility not only of the hand, but of the legs and of the whole body, was one of the first conditions of the art.

Chicot did not appear to have learnt fencing at this school, but seemed rather to anticipate the modern style, the superiority and grace of which is in the agility of the hands and immovability of the body. He stood erect and firm on both legs, with a nervous and supple wrist, and a sword that seemed a flexible reed from the point to the

middle of the blade, and an inflexible steel from the middle to the guard.

After the first passes, on seeing before him this man of bronze, whose wrist alone seemed alive, Brother Jacques became impatient, which merely made Chicot extend his long arm, and at every opening left by the young man, strike him full on the chest. We may imagine that with this habit of striking with the edge as often as the point, these openings were frequent. On each of these openings, his long arm extended itself by three feet, and planted the button straight on the brother's breast, as methodically as if directed by mechanism, and not by an organ of uncertain flesh.

On each of these strokes of the button, Jacques, red with anger and eagerness, made a leap backwards.

For about ten minutes, the youth displayed all the resources of his prodigious activity; he sprang like a tiger, he wriggled like a serpent, he glided under the bosom of Chicot, bounded from right to left. But the latter, with his quiet manner and long arm, seized his opportunity, and whilst parrying the foil of his adversary, invariably sent the terrible button to the same place.

Brother Borromée grew pale while he contained all the passions lately excited within him.

At length Jacques rushed a last time on Chicot, who, seeing him unsteady on his legs, made a feint to tempt him; Jacques did not refuse it, and Chicot, parrying his thrust with force threw the poor fellow off his equilibrium and he fell.

Chicot, immovable as a rock, had remained in the same place.

Brother Borromée bit his fingers till they bled.

"You did not tell us, monsieur, that you were a pillar of the fencing-school," he said.

"He!" exclaimed Gorenflot, thunderstruck, but triumphant, with a feeling of friendship easily understood: "Why! he never goes out!"

"I, a poor bourgeois," said Chicot; "I, Robert Briquet, a pillar of the fencing-school! Ah! monsieur."

"But, monsieur," said Borromée, "to handle a sword as you do, you must have exercised enormously."

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes," replied Chicot, good-humoredly; "I have, in fact, sometimes taken up a sword; but in holding it, I have always observed one thing."

"Which?"

"That for him who holds it, pride is a bad counsellor, and passion a bad assistant. Now listen, my little Brother Jacques," he added, "you have a neat wrist, but you have neither head nor legs; you are quick, but you do not reason. In arms there are three essential things: first the head, then the hand, and next the legs. With the first you can defend yourself; with the first and second you might conquer, but by uniting all three you can conquer, always."

"Oh! Monsieur," said Jacques, "fence with Brother Borromée; it will certainly be worth seeing."

Chicot, scornful, was about to refuse the proposition; but he reflected that probably the treasurer would, in his pride, take some advantage of it.

"Be it so," he said, "and if Brother Borromée consents, I am at his orders."

"No, monsieur," replied the treasurer, "I should be beaten; and I would rather confess it than prove it."

"Oh! how modest he is, how amiable he is!" said Gorenflot.

"You are mistaken," replied the unmerciful Chicot to him in a whisper, "he is mad with vanity; at his age, if I had had such an opportunity, I would have asked on my knees for a lesson like the one Jacques has received."

Thus saying, Chicot resumed his round shoulders, circumflexed legs, eternal grimace, and returned to his seat on the bench.

Jacques followed him; admiration triumphed over the shame of his defeat.

"Give me some lessons, Monsieur Robert," he said; "the reverend prior will permit it, will you not?"

"Yes, my child," replied Gorenflot, "with pleasure."

"I do not wish to interfere with your master, my friend," said Chicot, and he saluted Borromée.

"I am not his sole master," replied the latter; "I do not alone teach arms here; neither the honor nor the defeat is wholly due to me."

"Who is his other professor, then?" demanded Chicot, observing Borromée redden and betray the fear of having committed an imprudence.

"Why, no one," said Borromée, "no one."

"Yes, yes," said Chicot, "I heard perfectly. Who is your other master, Jacques?"

"And, yes, yes," said Gorenflot, "a short, fat man you presented to me, Borromée, and who comes here sometimes; a pleasant-looking man and a good drinker."

"I do not remember his name," said Borromée.

Brother Eusebius, with his satisfied mien and his knife passed through his belt, advanced innocently.

"I know him," he said.

Borromée made him repeated signs which he did not observe.

"It is Maître Bussy Leclerc," he continued, "who has been a professor of arms at Brussels."

"Ah! yes," said Chicot, "'Maître Bussy Leclerc,' a fine blade!"

And while saying this with all the simplicity of which he was capable, Chicot intercepted the furious glance which Borromée shot at the unlucky, but obliging, cook.

"Stay, I did not know he was called Bussy Leclerc. They had forgotten to inform me of it," said Gorenflot.

"I did not think the name would at all interest your reverence," said Borromée.

"In fact," said Chicot, "one master of arms or another, it mattered not, provided he was a good one."

"In fact, it mattered not," repeated Gorenflot, "provided he was a good one."

And, thereupon, he took the way to the staircase of his apartment, followed by the general admiration.

The exercise was over.

At the foot of the staircase, Jacques reiterated his request to Chicot, to the great displeasure of Borromée, but Chicot replied :

"I cannot teach you, my friend ; I taught myself alone, by reflection and practice, and I advise you to do the same."

Borromée commanded a movement which turned all the friars towards the buildings for the rentrée. Gorenflot leant on Chicot, and majestically mounted the staircase.

"I hope," he said, with pride, "that this is a house devoted to the king, and good for something, eh?"

"*Peste !* I think so," said Chicot. "One sees fine things, reverend prior, in visiting you."

"And all this in one month, in less than a month even."

"And done by you?"

"Done by me, by me alone, as you see," said Gorenflot, drawing himself up.

"It is more than I expected, my friend ; and when I return from my mission——"

"Ah ! true, dear friend, let us talk of your mission."

"The more willingly, as I have a message, or rather a messenger, to send to the king before my departure."

"To the king, dear friend ? a messenger ? You correspond with the king?"

"Directly."

"And you want a messenger, you say?"

"I want a messenger."

"Will you have one of our monks ? It would be an honor to the priory if one of our monks saw the king."

"Assuredly."

"I will place two of our best legs at your disposal ;

but tell me, Chicot, how the king, who believed you dead——”

“I have already told you—I was only in a lethargy, and at the proper time I came to life again.”

“Then you are restored to favor?” asked Gorenflot.

“More than ever,” said Chicot.

“In that case,” said Gorenflot, stopping him, “you can tell the king all that we are doing here for his interest.”

“I shall not fail to do so, my friend; I shall not fail, be assured.”

“Oh! dear Chicot,” exclaimed Gorenflot, who already saw himself a bishop.

“But first I have two requests to make.”

“What are they?”

“The first is money, which the king will repay you.”

“Money!” exclaimed Gorenflot, rising with precipitation, “my coffers are full.”

“You are very lucky,” said Chicot.

“Will you have a thousand crowns?”

“No; that it is far too much, dear friend; I am modest in my tastes, humble in my desires, and my title of ambassador does not make me proud. I conceal it rather than boast of it. A hundred crowns will suffice me.”

“Here they are. And the second thing?”

“An attendant.”

“An attendant?”

“Yes, to accompany me; I am fond of society.”

“Ah! my friend, if I were but free as formerly,” said Gorenflot, sighing.

“Yes, but you are not.”

“Greatness enslaves me,” murmured Gorenflot.

“Alas!” said Chicot, “we cannot have everything at once; not being enabled to have your honorable company, my dearest prior, I will content myself with that of little Brother Jacques.”

“Little Brother Jacques?”

“Yes, he pleases me.”

"You are right, Chicot," said Gorenflot; "he is a rare subject, and will go far."

"I shall first take him two hundred and fifty leagues, if you will permit it."

"He is yours, my friend."

The prior rang a bell, at the sound of which a brother appeared.

"Send Brother Jacques here, and also our messenger."

In about ten minutes both appeared at the door.

"Jacques," said Gorenflot, "I give you a special mission."

"To me, reverend prior?" said the young man, astonished.

"Yes, you will accompany Monsieur Briquet on a long journey."

"Oh!" cried the young brother, enthusiastically, "I shall go on a journey with M. Briquet, I shall be free! Ah! Monsieur Robert Briquet, we will practise every day—shall we not?"

"Yes, my child."

"And I may carry my musket?"

"You shall carry it."

Jacques bounded joyfully from the room.

"As to the commission," said Gorenflot, "I beg you to give your orders. Advance, Brother Panurge."

"Panurge," said Chicot, to whom this name recalled certain memories not exempt from sweetness, "Panurge?"

"Alas, yes," said Gorenflot, "I have chosen this brother, who is named, like the other, Panurge, to make journeys as the other did."

"Then our old friend is out of the service?"

"He is dead," said Gorenflot, "he is dead."

"Oh!" said Chicot, with commiseration, "the fact is, he must have been quite old."

"Nineteen years, my friend, he was nineteen years old."

"This is a case of remarkable longevity," said Chicot; "convents alone can present such examples."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PENITENT.

PANURGE, thus announced by the friar, soon showed himself.

It was certainly not from his moral or physical character that he had been admitted to replace his defunct namesake, for never had a more intelligent face been dishonored by the application of the name of an ass.

He resembled a fox, rather, with his small eyes, sharp nose, and protruding jaw.

Chicot looked at him for a moment, and during this moment, short as it was, he seemed to have appreciated his value as messenger of the convent.

Panurge remained humbly at the door.

"Come here, Monsieur the Courier," said Chicot; "do you know the Louvre?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Panurge.

"And in the Louvre, do you know a certain Henri de Valois?"

"The king?"

"I am not so sure about that," said Chicot; "however, they are in the habit of calling him so."

"It is with the king I shall have business?"

"Precisely, do you know him?"

"Very well, Monsieur Briquet."

"In that case, you will ask to see him."

"Will they let me in?"

"As far as his valet, yes, your habit is a passport; his majesty is very religious, as you know."

"And what shall I say to the valet of his majesty?"

"You will say you were sent by the Shade."

"What shade?"

"Curiosity is a vice, brother."

"Pardon."

"You will say, then, that you were sent by the Shade."

"Yes."

"And that you want the letter."

"What letter?"

"Again!"

"Ah! true."

"My reverend," said Chicot, turning towards Gorenflot, "decidedly, I liked the other Panurge best."

"Is that all I have to do?" demanded the courier.

"You will add that the shade will wait for it, going slowly along the road to Charenton."

"It is on that road, then, that I am to join you?"

"Precisely."

Panurge walked towards the door, and raised the portière to go out. It struck Chicot that in doing this, Brother Panurge had unmasked a listener.

But the screen fell so rapidly, that Chicot was unable to assure himself whether that which he took for reality, was not merely a vision.

Chicot's acute mind soon led him to an almost certainty that it was Brother Borromée who was listening.

"Ah! you are listening," he thought; "so much the better—in that case, I will speak that you may hear."

"And so," said Gorenflot, "you are honored with a mission from the king, dear friend."

"Confidential, yes."

"Which relates to politics, I presume?"

"So do I."

"What? do you not know with what mission you are charged?"

"I know that I carry a letter, that's all."

"A state secret, no doubt?"

"I think so."

"And you have no idea——"

"We are sufficiently alone, for me to tell you what I think, are we not?"

"Speak, I am a tomb for secrets."

"Well, the king has at length decided to send aid to the Duke of Anjou."

"Really?"

"Yes, Monsieur de Joyeuse was to set out last night for that purpose."

"But you, my friend?"

"I am going towards Spain."

"And how do you travel?"

"Oh! as we used to, on foot, on horseback, in carriages, just as it may happen."

"Jacques will be a good travelling companion, and you have done well to ask for him; he understands Latin, the little scamp."

"I confess, for my part, he pleases me very much."

"That is enough to induce me to give him to you; but I think, besides, that he will be a useful second, in case of an encounter."

"Thank you, my friend. I have now nothing more to do than to take my leave."

"Adieu."

"What are you doing?"

"I am preparing to give you my blessing."

"Bah! between us," said Chicot, "that is useless."

"You are right," said Gorenflot, "it is good for strangers."

And the two friends tenderly embraced each other.

"Jacques!" cried the prior, "Jacques!"

Panurge showed his sharp face in the doorway.

"What! have you not yet started?" exclaimed Chicot.

"Pardon me, monsieur!"

"Go instantly!" said Gorenflot; "M. Briquet is in a great hurry. Where is Jacques?"

Brother Borromée now appeared, gay and smiling.

"Brother Jacques!" repeated the prior.

"Brother Jacques is gone," said the treasurer.

"How gone?" exclaimed Chicot.

"Did you not desire that some one should go to the Louvre, monsieur?"

"But it was Brother Panurge," said Gorenflot.

"Oh, fool that I am! I understood Jacques," said Borromée, striking his forehead.

Chicot frowned; but Borromée's regret was apparently so sincere, that a reproach would have seemed cruel.

"I will wait, then, till Jacques returns," he said.

Borromée saluted, and frowned in turn.

"By the way," he said, "I forgot to announce to the reverend prior, and I even came up for that purpose, that the unknown lady has arrived, and desires to have an audience with your reverence."

Chicot opened his wide ears.

"Alone?" demanded Gorenflot.

"With an attendant."

"Is she young?" said Gorenflot.

Borromée modestly lowered his eyes.

"Good, he is a hypocrite," thought Chicot.

"She appears still young," said Borromée.

"My friend," said Gorenflot, turning towards the false Robert Briquet, "you understand?"

"I will leave you," said Chicot. "I will wait in the next room, or in the court."

"Just so, my dear friend."

"It is some distance from here to the Louvre, monsieur," observed Borromée, "and Brother Jacques may be late; the more likely, as the person to whom you have written, may perhaps hesitate to confide a letter of importance to a youth."

"You make these reflections somewhat late, Brother Borromée."

"Well, I was not aware; if they had confided to me——"

"Very well, very well, I shall slowly set out towards

Charenton; send him to join me on the road at whatever hour he may return."

And he went towards the staircase.

"Not that way, monsieur, if you please," said Borromée, hastily, "the lady is coming up, and she does not wish to meet any one."

"You are right," said Chicot, smiling, "I will take the little staircase."

And he advanced towards a door leading to a small closet.

"And I," said Borromée, "shall have the honor of introducing the penitent to the reverend prior."

"Just so," said Gorenflot.

"You know the way?" said Borromée, seemingly ill at ease.

"Perfectly."

And Chicot went out through the cabinet.

Next to the cabinet came a room; the back staircase led to this room.

Chicot had spoken the truth, he knew the way, but he did not recognize this room.

In fact, it was much changed since his last visit; from pacific, it had become warlike. The walls were hung with arms, the tables and consoles were loaded with sabres, swords, and pistols; every corner was a nest of muskets and arquebuses.

Chicot stopped for a moment in this room; he wanted time to reflect.

"They hide Jacques from me; they hide the lady; they make me take the back-stairs, to leave the grand staircase free; the meaning of this is, that they wish to keep me away from the young monk, and conceal the lady from me: this is clear.

"I ought, therefore, to do exactly the contrary of what they wish me to do.

"Consequently, I shall await the return of Jacques, and I will place myself in a position to see the mysterious lady.

"Oh! oh! here is a beautiful shirt of mail thrown in this corner—supple, fine, and exquisitely tempered."

He lifted it and admired it.

"I wanted exactly such a one," he said; "light as linen cloth. It is far too narrow for the prior. Really one would think the shirt was made for me. Let us borrow it of Dom Modeste: I will give it to him on my return."

And Chicot quickly folded it together and slipped it under his doublet.

He was fastening the last button when Brother Borromée appeared on the threshold.

"Oh! oh!" muttered Chicot, "you again; but you come too late, my friend."

Crossing his long arms behind his back and leaning against the wall, Chicot stood as if admiring the trophies.

"Is Monsieur Robert Briquet seeking some weapons to suit him?" said Borromée.

"I, my dear friend!" said Chicot, "and what do I want with arms?"

"You use them so well."

"Theory, dear brother, theory—nothing more. A bourgeois like myself may be active with his legs and arms, but what he needs and always will need, is the courage of a soldier. The foils look elegantly enough in my hand, but Brother Jacques, believe me, would make me jump from here to Charenton with the point of a sword."

"Really," said Borromée, half convinced by the innocent and good-humored manner of Chicot, who, let us add, had made himself more round-shouldered, more twisted, and more squinting than ever.

"And, besides, my breath fails me," continued Chicot; "you have observed that I cannot bend; my legs are execrable, there is my principal defect."

"Will you allow me to observe, monsieur, that this defect is even more important in travelling than in handling weapons."

"Ah! you know that I am travelling," said Chicot, negligently.

"Panurge told me," replied Borromée, reddening.

"That is queer, I do not remember having spoken of that to Panurge; but no matter, I have no reason to conceal it. Yes, brother, I am taking a little journey; I am going to my own country, where I have some property."

"Do you know, Monsieur Briquet, that you have procured Brother Jacques a great honor?"

"That of accompanying me?"

"In the first place, but in the next, that of seeing the king."

"Or his valet, for it is possible and even probable, that Brother Jacques gets no further."

"You are on intimate footing at the Louvre."

"Oh! most intimate, monsieur; it is I who furnish the king and the young nobility of the court with hosiery."

"The king?"

"I already had his custom when he was but Duke of Anjou. On his return from Poland, he remembered me, and made me furnish to the court."

"It is a fine acquaintance you have there, Monsieur Briquet."

"The acquaintance with his majesty?"

"Yes."

"All the world does not say so, Brother Borromée."

"Oh! the Leaguers."

"Every one is more or less a Leaguer now."

"You are but little, to a certainty."

"I,—why so?"

"When one knows the king personally."

"Eh! eh! I have my politics, like others," said Chicot.

"Yes, but your politics are in harmony with those of the king."

"Don't be too sure of that; we often dispute."

"If you dispute, how does he entrust you with a mission?"

"A commission, you mean."

"Mission or commission, matters little, one or the other implies confidence."

"Pshaw! provided I know enough to take my measures, that is all a king requires."

"Your measures?"

"Yes."

"Political measures; measures of finance?"

"No, measures of cloth."

"What?" said Borromée, stupefied.

"No doubt; you shall understand."

"I am listening."

"You know that the king made a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Chartres."

"Yes, to obtain an heir."

"Precisely. You know that there is a sure way of arriving at the result sought for by the king."

"It seems, at all events, that the king does not employ that method."

"Brother Borromée!" said Chicot.

"What?"

"You know perfectly well that the only question is to obtain an heir to the crown by miracle and not otherwise."

"And this miracle they seek?"

"At Notre Dame de Chartres."

"Ah, yes, the chemise?"

"Yes, that's it. The king took the chemise from this good Notre Dame, and gave it to the queen, so that in exchange for it he resolved to give her a robe similar to that of our lady of Toledo, which is, they say, the handsomest and richest robe of the Virgin that exists in the world."

"So that you are going——"

"To Toledo, dear Brother Borromée, to Toledo, to take the measure of this robe, and make one like it."

Borromée appeared to hesitate, whether he should believe or disbelieve Chicot on his word.

After mature reflection, we are authorized to think that he did not believe him.

"You can judge, then," continued Chicot, as though entirely ignorant of what was passing in the treasurer's mind; "that the company of men of the church has been most agreeable to me under such circumstances. But time flies, and Maître Jacques must soon return. Besides, I will wait for him outside, at the Croix Faubin, for example."

"I think that will be best," said Borromée.

"You will have the goodness to tell him as soon as he comes."

"Yes."

"And you will send him to me?"

"I will not fail to do so."

"Thank you, dear Brother Borromée, delighted at having made your acquaintance."

They bowed to each other. Chicot left by the little staircase. Brother Borromée closed the door behind him and bolted it.

"Come, come," said Chicot, "it is important, it seems, that I should not see the lady; this being the case—I must see her."

To execute his project, Chicot left the priory of the Jacobins as openly as possible, conversed a moment with the door-keeper, and wended his way towards the Croix Faubin, walking in the middle of the road.

But, having reached the Croix Faubin, he disappeared at the angle of a farm wall, and there, feeling sure that he might defy all the arguses of the priory, had they Borromée's eagle eye, he glided along the buildings, followed through a dry ditch, a hedge which doubled back, and, without being perceived, gained an elm tree hedge, which extended exactly opposite the convent.

Settled at this point, which presented to him a centre of observation, he seated himself, or rather lay down, and waited to see Jacques return, or the lady go out.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AMBUSCADE.

CHICOT, we have observed, was never long in making up his mind. He resolved to wait, and to wait as comfortably as possible.

He made a slight opening through the hedge, that he might see those who came and went.

The road was deserted. As far as Chicot's eye could reach, there appeared neither horseman, idler, nor peasant. All the crowd of the previous evening had vanished with the spectacle that had produced it.

Chicot saw nothing, but a man rather shabbily dressed, who walked across the road, and measured the ground with a long pointed stick.

Chicot had absolutely nothing to do. He was delighted at having found this worthy man who could serve him as a subject of contemplation.

"What is he measuring? Why is he measuring?" These were, for a few minutes, the most serious reflections of Maître Robert Briquet.

He resolved, therefore, not to lose sight of him.

Unfortunately, at the moment when, having reached the end of his measure, the man was about to raise his head, a more important discovery absorbed Chicot's attention, and compelled him to raise his eyes in another direction.

The window of the Gorenflot's balcony opened wide, and there appeared the respectable rotundity of Dom Modeste, who, with his holiday smile, and most gallant manner, led forth a lady, almost hidden under a mantle of velvet trimmed with fur.

"Oh ! oh !" said Chicot to himself, "here is the penitent. Her appearance is youthful, let us look at the head a little : there, good, turn yourself a little more to this side ; capital ! It is really singular, but I find likenesses in every face I see. It is an unhappy mania I have ! Good, here comes the squire ; oh ! oh ! as for him, I am not deceived, it is Mayneville himself. Yes, yes, the curled mustache, the basket-hilted sword ; it is he. But let us reason a little ; I am not deceived about Mayneville, *ventre de biche !* why should I be deceived about Madame de Montpensier ? For this woman, yes ! *morbleu !* it is the duchess."

Chicot, for the moment, abandoned the man with the measure, that he might not lose sight of the two illustrious personages.

In about a minute, he saw appear behind them, the pale face of Borromée, whom Mayneville frequently questioned.

"Just so," said he, "all the world is alike ; bravo ! plot, it is the fashion ; but, the devil ! is the duchess, by chance, going to reside with Dom Modeste, she who already has a house at Bel Esbat, a hundred paces away ?"

At this moment Chicot's attention was again excited. While the duchess conversed with Gorenflot, or rather made him talk, M. de Mayneville made a sign to some one without.

Chicot, however, had seen no one, except the man who was measuring.

It was, however, to him that the sign was addressed, and the result was, that he ceased measuring. He stopped opposite the balcony, with his face turned towards Paris.

Gorenflot continued his amiabilities with the penitent.

M. de Mayneville whispered a few words into the ear of Borromée, and the latter began immediately to gesticulate behind the prior in a manner unintelligible to Chicot, but apparently clear to the man, for he went away, posted himself in another place, where a fresh sign from Borromée and Mayneville nailed him like a statue.

After remaining thus for a few minutes, upon a sign from Brother Borromée, he began a sort of exercise, which engaged Chicot's attention, the more, because he could not divine its purpose. From the place where he stood, the man began to run quickly to the gate of the priory, while M. de Mayneville held his watch in his hand.

"The devil, the devil!" murmured Chicot, "all this looks suspicious; the enigma is well put, but perhaps I could solve it, could I but see the face of that man who measures."

At this moment, as if the familiar demon of Chicot had resolved to grant his wish, the man turned round, and Chicot recognized Nicholas Poulain, lieutenant of the provostship, the same to whom he had, the day before, sold his armor.

"Come," said he, "*vive la Ligue!* I have seen enough now, to guess the rest with a little trouble. Well, be it so, we will work."

After a short conference between the duchess, Gorenflot, and Mayneville, Borromée closed the window, and the balcony was left deserted.

The duchess and her squire came out of the priory to enter the litter that awaited them. Dom Modeste, who had accompanied them as far as the door, exhausted himself in bows and salutations.

The curtains of the litter were still open, when a Jacobin monk, in whom Chicot recognized Jacques, advanced from the Porte St. Antoine, approached, and looked earnestly into it.

Jacques, who had swiftly returned from the Louvre, stood in ecstasy before Madame de Montpensier.

"Come, come," said Chicot, "I have some luck. If Jacques had returned sooner I should not have seen the duchess, compelled as I was to run to my rendezvous at the Croix Faubin. Now, here is Madame de Montpensier gone, after arranging her little conspiracy; it is the turn of Maître Nicholas Poulain. That one I will settle in ten minutes."

In fact, the duchess, after passing by Chicot without seeing him, rolled towards Paris, and Nicholas Poulain prepared to follow her.

Like the duchess, he had to pass in front of the hedge occupied by Chicot.

Chicot observed him coming, as the hunter sees the game, ready to draw upon him when he gets within shot.

Poulain had arrived within call of Chicot.

"Eh! my good man," he said from his hole, "look this way if you please."

Poulain started, and turned his head toward the ditch.

"You saw me; very well!" continued Chicot. "Now, do not seem to notice, Maître Nicholas Poulain."

The lieutenant of the provostship bounded like a deer at the report of a gun.

"Who are you?" he said, "and what do you want?"

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"I am one of your friends, new, but intimate; what do I want? ah, it is a little too long to explain."

"But what do you want? Speak."

"I want you to come to me."

"To you?"

"Yes, here; come down into the ditch."

"What for?"

"You shall know when you come."

"But——"

"Seat yourself with your back to this hedge."

"What next?"

"Without looking toward me, without appearing to suspect who I am."

"Monsieur?"

"It is exacting a great deal, I know, but it cannot be helped. Maître Robert Briquet has a right to be exacting."

"Robert Briquet!" exclaimed Poulain, doing at the same time as he was desired.

"There, well, sit down, that's it. Ah! ah! it seems we were taking our little measurements of the road to Vincennes."

"I?"

"Without doubt; after all, there is nothing astonishing in the fact that a lieutenant of the provostship should do the office as a surveyor of the highways when the occasion presents itself?"

"It is true," said Poulain, a little reassured, "you see I was measuring."

"And all the better since you performed under the eyes of very illustrious personages."

"Of very illustrious personages? I do not comprehend."

"What! you are ignorant?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"That lady and gentleman who were on the balcony, and who have set out on their way to Paris,—you do not know who they are?"

"I swear to you."

"Ah! how lucky it is for me to be able to enlighten you. Imagine, Monsieur Poulain, that you had for admirers, in your office of surveyor, Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier, and M. le Comte de Mayneville. Don't move, if you please."

"Monsieur," said Nicholas Poulain, attempting to struggle, "these topics—the manner in which you address me——"

"If you move, my dear Monsieur Poulain," continued Chicot, "you will drive me to some extremity. Be quiet, therefore."

Poulain heaved a sigh.

"There, good," continued Chicot. "I was telling you, then, that having worked in this manner under the eyes of these personages, and not having been noticed by them,—so, at least you have affirmed,—I was saying, my dear monsieur, that it would be very advantageous for you

if another illustrious personage, the king, for example noticed you."

"The king?"

"His majesty, yes, Monsieur Poulain; he is quite inclined, I assure you, to admire all sorts of work, and to reward every effort."

"Oh! Monsieur Briquet, for pity's sake."

"I repeat to you, dear Monsieur Poulain, that if you move you are a dead man; remain quiet, therefore, to avoid that disgrace."

"But what do you want of me, then, in the name of Heaven?"

"Your good, and nothing else; have I not told you I am your friend?"

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Poulain, in despair, "I really do not know what injury I have done his majesty, yourself, or any one in the world!"

"Dear Monsieur Poulain, you will explain yourself to the proper person, this is not my business; I have my own ideas, you see; these ideas are, that his majesty would not approve if he knew that in the exercise of his functions as surveyor, his lieutenant of the provostship obeyed the signs and indications of M. de Mayneville. Who knows, besides, if the king may not take it ill, that his lieutenant should have omitted to state, in his daily report, that Madame de Montpensier and M. de Mayneville entered yesterday morning the good city of Paris? That alone—observe, Monsieur Poulain—will certainly get you into trouble with his majesty."

"Monsieur Briquet, an omission is not a crime, and certainly his majesty is too enlightened——"

"Dear Monsieur Poulain, you invent fancies, I think; I myself see more clearly through this affair."

"What do you see?"

"A strong and handsome gallows."

"Monsieur Briquet!"

"Listen then, the devil! with a new rope, four soldiers

at the cardinal points, a number of Parisians round the scaffold, and a certain lieutenant of my acquaintance at the end of the cord."

Nicolas Poulain trembled so violently that he shook the whole hedge.

"Monsieur!" he said, clasping his hands.

"But I am your friend, dear Monsieur Poulain," continued Chicot, "and as a friend, here is a piece of advice I will give you——"

"Advice?"

"Yes, very easy to follow, thank God! You will go from this spot, at once—you understand—to——"

"To whom?" interrupted Nicholas Poulain, full of anguish, "to whom?"

"A moment, let me think," said Chicot; "to M. d'Epernon."

"M. d'Epernon! the king's friend?"

"Precisely; you will take him aside."

"M. d'Epernon?"

"Yes, and you will tell him all about that measuring of the road."

"Is this madness, monsieur?"

"It is wisdom, on the contrary, supreme wisdom."

"I do not understand."

"It is nevertheless clear. If I denounce you, purely and simply, as the man of the cuirasses and measures, they will hang you on a tree; if, on the contrary, you perform your part well, you will be loaded with recompenses and honors. You do not appear convinced, however. It will give me the trouble of returning to the Louvre, but, faith! I will go just the same; there is nothing I would not do for you."

And Nicholas Poulain heard the noise made by Chicot as he disturbed the branches to rise.

"No, no," he said, "remain here, I will go."

"Very well; but you understand, dear Monsieur Poulain, no subterfuges, for to-morrow I shall send a short note to

the king, of whom I have the honor, such as you see me, or rather such as you do not see me, to be the intimate friend; so that if you are not hanged until the day after to-morrow, you will only be hanged the higher."

"I will go," said the lieutenant, terrified, "but you strangely abuse——"

"I?"

"Oh!"

"Eh! dear Monsieur Poulain, erect altars to me; you were a traitor five minutes ago, I make you the saviour of your country. But run quickly, Monsieur Poulain, for I am in a great hurry to get away; and yet I cannot do so until you are gone. Hôtel d'Epéron, don't forget."

Nicholas Poulain rose, and with the countenance of a man in despair, shot like an arrow in the direction of the Porte Saint Antoine.

"Ah! it was time," said Chicot, "for some one is leaving the priory. But it is not my little Jacques. Eh, eh!" said Chicot, "who is this rascal, cut as the architect of Alexander would have cut Mount Athos? *Ventre de biche!* he is a very big dog to accompany a little cur like myself."

On seeing this emissary of the prior, Chicot hastened to reach the Croix Faubin, the place of rendezvous.

As he was compelled to reach it by a roundabout way, the straight line had an advantage over him in rapidity; the giant monk, who strode over the ground at a swift pace, arrived first at the Cross.

Chicot, besides, lost a little time in examining his man, whose physiognomy he did not remember in the least.

In fact, he was a veritable Philistine, this monk. In the haste he had made to join Chicot, his Jacobin robe had not been closed, and through a crevice were seen his muscular limbs muffled up in trunks not in the least clerical.

His hood, half thrown back, discovered a head of hair over which the scissors of the priory had not yet passed.

In addition, a certain expression, far from religious, contracted the indented angles of his mouth; and when he passed from a smile to a laugh, he exhibited three teeth, which looked like palisades planted behind the rampart of his thick lips.

Arms as long as those of Chicot, but stouter, shoulders capable of lifting the gates of Gaza, a large kitchen knife passed through the band of his waist; such were, with a bag, or wallet, rolled like a buckler round his breast, the offensive and defensive weapons of this Goliath of the Jacobins.

"Decidedly," said Chicot, "he is very ugly, and if he does not bring me good news with a head like that, I shall consider such a creature very useless on earth."

The monk, seeing Chicot approaching, gave him an almost military salute.

"What do you want, my friend?" said Chicot.

"Are you M. Robert Briquet?"

"In person."

"In that case I have a letter for you from the reverend prior."

"Give it me."

Chicot took the letter and read as follows:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have reflected since our separation; it is really impossible for me to let the lamb which the Lord has confided to me, go among the devouring wolves of the world. I speak, as you will understand, of our little Jacques Clement, who has just been received by the king and has perfectly acquitted himself of your message.

"In lieu of Jacques, whose age is still tender, and whose services are needed at the priory, I send you a good and worthy brother of our community; his manners are mild, and his humor innocent. I am sure you will be pleased with him as a travelling companion."

"Yes, yes," thought Chicot, casting a side glance at the monk, "count on that." And he continued: "I join my

benediction to this letter, and I regret not having given it to you in person."

"Adieu, dear friend."

"What fine writing," said Chicot, when he had finished reading it. "I will wager that this letter was written by the treasurer; he writes a superb hand."

"It was, in fact, Brother Borromée who wrote the letter," said the monk.

"Well, in that case, my friend," said Chicot, smiling pleasantly at the Goliath, "you will return to the priory."

"I?"

"Yes, and you will tell his reverence that I have changed my mind, and that I intend to travel alone."

"What! you will not take me, monsieur?" said the monk, with an astonishment that contained something of a threat.

"No, my friend, no."

"And why so, if you please?"

"Because I must be economical; times are hard, and you would eat enormously."

The monk showed his three tusks.

"Jacques eats quite as much as I do," he said.

"Yes, but Jacques is a monk," said Chicot.

"Well, and what am I, then?"

"You, my friend, you are a foot-soldier or a gendarme, which, between ourselves, might scandalize the Notre Dame, to whom I am sent as deputy."

"What do you mean by foot-soldier or gendarme?" replied the monk; "I am a Jacobin; do you not see my monk's robe?"

"The frock does not make the monk, my friend," replied Chicot; "but the sword makes the soldier; tell that to Brother Borromée, if you like."

And Chicot made his bow to the giant, who took his way to the priory, grumbling like a beaten hound.

As to our traveller, he allowed his intended companion to

disappear and when he saw him enter the great door of the priory, he hid himself behind a hedge, took off his doublet, and put on the fine shirt of mail we have mentioned.

His toilette finished, he cut across the fields to reach the road to Charenton.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GUISES.

IN the evening of the day on which Chicot set out for Navarre, we find again in the great hall of the Hôtel de Guise, into which we have already, more than once, conducted our readers,—we find again in the great hall of the Hôtel de Guise the person who, disguised as a page, had entered Paris behind Carmainges, and who was also, as we know, the fair penitent of Dom Gorenflot.

On this occasion no precaution had been taken to disguise either her person or her sex. Madame de Montpensier, attired in an elegant robe with an open collar, her hair glittering with diamond stars, as was the fashion at this period, was standing in the embrasure of a window, waiting impatiently for some one who was late in coming.

Night was falling and the duchess could scarcely distinguish the door of the hotel, upon which her eyes were constantly fixed.

At length a horse's trot was heard, and ten minutes later, the voice of the usher mysteriously announced to the duchess, "M. le Duc de Mayenne."

Madame de Montpensier rose and ran to meet her brother with such haste, that she forgot to walk on the point of the right foot, as was her habit in order to conceal her lameness.

"Alone, brother," she said, "you are alone?"

"Yes, sister," said the duke, seating himself, after kissing the hand of the duchess.

"But Henri—where is Henri, then? Do you know that every one expects him here?"

"Henri, my sister, has nothing to do in Paris, while, on the contrary, he has still much to do in Flanders and Picardy. Our labor is slow and subterranean, we have work there. Why should we leave this work to come to Paris, where all is done?"

"Yes; but where it will be quickly undone, if you do not hasten."

"Bah!"

"Bah! as much as you like, brother; I tell you that the bourgeois are no longer content with all these reasons; let them see their Duke Henri, that is their desire."

"They shall see him at the proper time; has not Mayneville explained all this to them?"

"Undoubtedly, but, you are aware, his voice does not carry the same weight as yours."

"Go to the most pressing business—and Salcede?"

"Dead."

"Without speaking?"

"Without breathing a word."

"Good! and the arming?"

"Finished."

"And Paris?"

"Divided into sixteen sections."

"And each section has the chief we appointed?"

"Yes."

"Let us live in peace, then. *Pâque Dieu!* it is what I say to the good bourgeois."

"They will not listen to you."

"Bah!"

"I tell you that they are bedeviled."

"My sister, you are a little too much in the habit of judging others by your own impatience."

"Do you seriously reproach me with that?"

"God forbid! but what my brother Henri says, must be done. And my brother Henri does not think it wise to hurry matters."

"What is to be done then?" demanded the duchess, impatiently.

"Does anything need haste, sister?"

"Everything."

"How do you think we should begin?"

"By taking the king."

"This is your fixed idea. I do not say it is bad, if it could be done, but to plan and perform are two very different affairs; remember how often we have already failed."

"Times are changed. The king has no longer any one to defend him."

"No, except the Swiss, the Scotch, the French guards."

"My brother, when you wish it, I who speak to you, will show you the king on the road, escorted simply by two lackeys."

"I have been told this a hundred times, and never seen it once."

"You will see it then, if you only remain in Paris three days."

"Still another project!"

"A plan, you mean."

"Be good enough to communicate it to me, in that case."

"Oh! it is only a woman's idea, and you will laugh at it."

"God forbid that I should wound your pride as an inventor! let us hear the plan."

"You are laughing at me, Mayenne?"

"No, I am listening."

"Well! in four words, it is——"

At this moment the usher raised the tapestry.

"Will your highness be pleased to receive M. de Mayneville?" he inquired.

"My accomplice," said the duchess, "let him enter."

M. de Mayneville entered, and approaching the Duc de Mayenne, kissed his hand.

"One word, my lord," he said, "I come from the Louvre."

"Well!" exclaimed at once Mayenne and the duchess.

"They suspect your arrival."

"How so?"

"I was conversing with the head of the post of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, when two Gascons passed."

"Did you know them?"

"No, they were quite newly dressed. '*Cap de Bious!*' said one, 'you have a magnificent doublet; but it will not be of the same use to you as your yesterday's cuirass.'

"'Bah, bah! however solid the sword of M. de Mayenne may be,' said the other, 'it will cut no deeper into the satin than it would into the cuirass.'

"And thereupon the Gascons went on in a series of bravadoes, which indicated that they knew of your being near."

"And to whom do these Gascons belong?"

"I know nothing about them."

"And they retired?"

"Ah! not thus. They talked so loudly that some passers-by approached, and asked if you were really coming. They were about to reply, when suddenly a man approached the Gascon and touched him on the shoulder. Either I am much deceived, my lord, or this man was Loignac."

"What then?" demanded the duchess.

"To a few words spoken in his ear, the Gascon only replied by a sign of submission, and followed his interrupter."

"So that?"

"So that I could learn no more. But in the meantime be upon your guard."

"You did not follow them?"

"I did, but from afar, I was afraid of being recognized

as a gentleman belonging to your highness. They went towards the Louvre, and disappeared behind the Hôtel des Meubles, but after them a whole train of voices repeated, 'Mayenne, Mayenne!''"

"I have a very simple method of replying," said the duke.

"Which?" demanded his sister.

"To go and pay my respects to the king this evening."

"To the king?"

"Certainly; I have come to Paris, I bring him news from his good towns of Picardy. He can have nothing to say against that."

"The method is a good one," said Mayneville.

"It is imprudent," said the duchess.

"It is indispensable, sister, if, indeed, they suspect my arrival in Paris. It was also the opinion of our brother Henri that I should dismount, booted and spurred, at the Louvre, and present to the king the respects of all the family; once this duty accomplished, I am free, and can receive whom I please."

"The members of the committee, for example; they expect you."

"I will receive them at the Hôtel Saint Denis on my return from the Louvre," said Mayenne. "Let them bring my horse, Mayneville, without rubbing him down, and just as he is: you will come with me to the Louvre. You, sister, will wait for us, if you please."

"Here?"

"No, at the Hôtel Saint Denis, where I have left my carriages, and where they think I am sleeping. We shall be there in two hours."

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT THE LOUVRE.

THAT same day, about noon, the king came out of his cabinet, and inquired for M. d'Epernon.

The duke hastened to obey, and passed into the king's apartment.

He found his majesty standing in an antechamber, attentively examining a young monk, who blushed and hung his head under the searching scrutiny of the king.

The king took D'Epernon aside.

"See, duke," he said, pointing to the young man, "what an odd-looking monk."

"Does your majesty think so?" said D'Epernon; "I think him very ordinary, myself."

"Really?"

And the king again contemplated him.

"What is your name?" he said to him.

"Brother Jacques, sire."

"Have you no other name?"

"My family name? Clement."

"Brother Jacques Clement?" repeated the king.

"Does not your majesty also find something strange in the name?" said the duke, smiling.

The king made no reply.

"You have performed your commission very well," he said to the monk, without ceasing to look at him.

"What commission, sire?" demanded the duke, with that boldness for which he was so often reproached, and which came from a daily familiarity with the king.

"Nothing," replied Henry; "a little secret between myself and some one you do not know, or rather whom you no longer know."

"How strangely you look at the lad, sire!" said D'Epernon, "you embarrass him."

"Very true; I know not why my eyes cannot keep away from him; it seems to me that I have already seen him, or that I shall see him. He has appeared to me in a dream, I think; well, well, I am talking nonsense. Go, little monk, you have completed your mission; we shall send the letter to him who asks for it. Be easy, D'Epernon."

"Sire!"

"Give him ten crowns."

"Thank you," said the monk.

"You did not say that as if you meant it," observed D'Epernon, who did not understand how a monk could despise ten crowns.

"I don't mean it," replied little Jacques, "because I would much prefer one of those handsome Spanish knives on the wall there."

"What! you do not prefer money to visit the buffoons of the fair Saint Laurent, or the tame rabbits of the Rue Sainte Marguerite?" said D'Epernon.

"I have made a vow of poverty and chastity," replied Jacques.

"Give him one of those Spanish blades then, and let him go, Lavalette," said the king.

The duke, like a parsimonious man, chose one of the least costly among the swords and gave it to Jacques.

It was a small Catalonian sword, solidly set in a handle of handsome cut horn.

Jacques took it, delighted to possess so good a weapon, and retired.

When the monk had left, the duke again attempted to question the king.

"Duke," interrupted the king, "have you among the forty-five two or three men who know how to ride?"

"A dozen at least, sire, and they will all be horsemen in a month."

"Then choose two, and let them come to me at once."

The duke bowed and retired, and called Loignac into the antechamber.

Loignac appeared in a few seconds.

"Loignac," said the duke, "send me this instant two good horsemen to execute a commission for his majesty."

Loignac hastily traversed the gallery and reached the building, which we shall henceforth call the lodging of the forty-five; he there opened the door and said in a commanding voice:

"Monsieur de Carmainges! Monsieur de Biran!"

"M. de Biran has gone out," said the sentinel.

"What! gone out without permission?"

"He is studying the quarter recommended to him by Monseigneur le Duc d'Epéron this morning."

"Very well; call Monsieur de Sainte Maline, then."

The two names sounded under the arches, and the chosen pair soon appeared.

"Messieurs," said Loignac, "follow me to M. le Duc d'Epéron."

And he conducted them to the duke, who, dismissing Loignac, led them to the king.

On a sign from his majesty, the duke retired, and the two young men remained.

It was the first time they had been in the presence of the king.

The king had a very majestic presence. Their emotion betrayed itself in different ways; Sainte Maline's eye was bright, his muscles firm, and his mustache curled; Carmainges, pale, quite as resolute, though less proud, dared not fix his glance on Henry.

"You belong to my forty-five, gentlemen?" said the king.

"I have the honor, sire," replied Sainte Maline.

"And you, monsieur?"

"I thought monsieur replied for us both, sire; and for that reason I did not answer, but I am devoted to your majesty's service as much as any one in the world."

"Good; then mount your horses and take the road to Tours; do you know it?"

"I will inquire," said Sainte Maline.

"I will find it," said Carmainges.

"I advise you to pass first through Charenton."

"Yes, sire."

"You will proceed until you overtake a man travelling alone."

"Will your majesty describe him?" said Saint Maline.

"Long arms and legs, and a large sword by his side."

"May we know his name, sire?" demanded Ernauton de Carmainges, whom the example of his companion induced to transgress the laws of etiquette and question the king.

"He is called the Shade," said Henry.

"We will ask the name of every traveller we meet, sire."

"And we will search every inn."

"When you have found and recognized the man, you will give him this letter."

Both young men held out their hands at the same time. The king remained a moment embarrassed.

"What is your name?" he inquired of one of them.

"Ernauton de Carmainges," he replied.

"And you?"

"Rene de Sainte Maline."

"Monsieur de Carmainges, you will carry the letter, and M. de Sainte Maline will deliver it."

Ernauton took the precious deposit, and prepared to secure it in his doublet.

Sainte Maline stopped his arm at the moment the letter was disappearing, and respectfully kissed the seal. He then handed the letter to Ernauton.

This flattery made the king smile.

"Come, come, gentlemen, I see I shall be well served."

"Is this all, sire?" said Ernauton.

"Yes, gentlemen, only a last recommendation."

The young men bowed and waited.

"This letter, gentlemen," said Henry, "is more precious than the life of a man. Upon your lives do not lose it. Give it secretly to the Shade, who will give you a receipt for it, which you will bring to me, and, above all, travel as though you were attending to your own business. Go."

The two young men left the royal cabinet, Ernauton overwhelmed with joy, Sainte Maline mad with jealousy; the one with fire in his eyes, the other with an eager glance that almost burned the doublet of his companion.

M. d'Epernon waited for them; he wished to question them.

"Monsieur le Duc," replied Ernauton, "the king did not authorize us to speak."

They went directly to the stables, where the king's huntsman gave them two roadsters, hardy and well equipped.

M. d'Epernon would surely have followed them to learn more, had he not been notified, just as Carmainges and Sainte Maline left him, that a man wished to speak with him instantly.

"What man?" demanded the duke, impatiently.

"The lieutenant of the provostship of Paris."

"Eh! *parfaidious!*" he exclaimed, "am I sheriff, provost, or knight of the watch?"

"No, my lord, but you are the king's friend," replied a modest voice at his left; "I entreat you as such to listen to me."

The duke turned round.

Near him, hat in hand, was a poor solicitor, who at every second passed from one shade of the rainbow to another.

"Who are you?" demanded the duke, brutally.

"Nicholas Poulain, at your service, my lord."

"And you wish to speak with me?"

"I beg for that favor."

"I have not the time."

"Not even to hear a secret?"

"I hear a hundred every day, monsieur; yours would make a hundred and one; that would be one too many."

"Even if it concerned the life of his majesty?" said Nicholas Poulain, whispering in D'Epernon's ear.

"Oh, oh! I am listening; come into my cabinet."

Nicholas Poulain wiped his forehead, running with perspiration, and followed the duke.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE REVELATION.

M. D'EPERNON, in crossing his anteroom, addressed himself to one of the gentlemen in attendance.

"What is your name, monsieur?" he asked of an unknown face.

"Pertinax de Montcrabeau, my lord," replied the gentleman.

"Well, Monsieur de Montcrabeau, place yourself at my door and let no one enter."

"Yes, Monsieur le Duc."

"No one, do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

And Monsieur Pertinax, who was sumptuously arrayed in a blue satin doublet and orange stockings, obeyed D'Epernon's order. He placed his back against the wall, and took up his position, with folded arms, against the tapestry.

Nicholas Poulain followed the duke to his cabinet.

He saw the door open and shut, then the portière drop over the door, and he began seriously to tremble.

"Let us hear your conspiracy, monsieur," said the duke, dryly; "but for heaven's sake, let it be a good one, for I have a multitude of agreeable things to do to-day, and if I lose my time with you, beware."

"Eh! Monsieur le Duc," said Nicholas Poulain, "it concerns the most frightful of crimes."

"In that case let us know the crime."

"Monsieur le Duc——"

"They wish to kill me, I suppose?" interrupted the duke, drawing himself up like a Spartan; "well! be it so, my life belongs to God and my king; let them take it."

"It does not concern you, my lord."

"Ah! that surprises me."

"It concerns the king. They wish to carry him off."

"Oh! again, that old story," said D'Epernon, contemptuously.

"This time the thing is serious, Monsieur le Duc, if you consider appearances."

"And on what day would they carry off his majesty?"

"The first time his majesty goes to Vincennes in his litter."

"How will they carry him off?"

"By killing his two attendants."

"And who will strike the blow?"

"Madame de Montpensier."

D'Epernon began to laugh.

"This poor duchess; what things are attributed to her!"

"Less than she plans, my lord."

"And she occupies herself with this at Soissons?"

"No, she is in Paris."

"In Paris?"

"I can answer for it too."

"You have seen her?"

"I have."

"Which means that you thought you saw her?"

"I have had the honor of speaking to her."

"The honor!"

"I am mistaken, Monsieur le Duc, the misfortune."

"But, my dear lieutenant of the provostship, it is not the duchess who will carry off the king."

"Pardon me, my lord."

"Herself?"

"In person, with her assistants, of course."

"And where will she place herself to preside at this abduction?"

"At a window of the Jacobin priory, which is, as you know, on the road to Vincennes."

"What the devil are you telling me?"

"The truth, monsieur. All the measures are taken to stop the litter at the gate of the priory."

"And who has taken these measures?"

"Alas!"

"Finish quickly—the devil!"

"I, my lord!"

D'Epernon started back.

"You?" he said.

Poulain heaved a sigh.

"You are in it—you who denounce?" continued D'Epernon.

"My lord," said Poulain, "a faithful subject of the king should risk everything in his service."

"In fact, *mordieu*! you risk hanging."

"I prefer death to infamy or to the death of the king; therefore I came."

"These are fine sentiments, monsieur, and you must have good reasons for them."

"I thought, my lord, that you were the king's friend, that you would not betray me, and would turn to good account the revelation I have made."

The duke scrutinized Poulain for some time, and steadily examined the lineaments of his pale countenance.

"There must be something else," he said; "the duchess, resolute as she is, would not attempt such an enterprise alone."

"She expects her brother," replied Nicholas Poulain.

"The Duke Henri!" exclaimed D'Epéron, with the terror one might feel on the approach of a lion.

"Not the Duke Henri; the Duke de Mayenne only."

"Ah!" said D'Epéron, breathing; "but no matter, I must set to work to counteract all these grand projects."

"Undoubtedly, my lord," said Poulain; "and it is on that account I have hastened."

"If you have spoken the truth, Monsieur the Lieutenant, you shall be rewarded."

"Why should I tell a lie, my lord? Where is my interest? I who eat the king's bread, do I, yes or no, owe him my services? I shall go to the king, therefore, if you do not believe me, and I will die, if necessary, to prove my words."

"No, *parfandious*! you will not go to the king. Understand, Maître Nicholas; you shall deal with me alone."

"Be it so, monseigneur; I only said this because you seemed to hesitate."

"No, I do not hesitate; and first, here are a hundred crowns I owe you."

"Monseigneur wishes it, then, to be for himself alone?"

"Yes, I have emulation, I have zeal, and I keep the secret for myself. You yield it to me, do you not?"

"Yes, my lord."

"With guarantee that it is a real secret?"

"Ah! with every guarantee."

"A thousand crowns will satisfy you, then—without counting the future?"

"I have a family, monseigneur."

"Well; but a thousand crowns! *parfandious*!"

"And if they knew in Lorraine that I had made such a revelation, each word I have spoken would cost me a pint of blood."

"Poor dear man!"

"Therefore, in case of misfortune, my family must be able to live."

"Well?"

"Well! this is the reason why I accept the thousand crowns."

"The devil take the explanation; what matters it to me for what motive you accept, so long as you do not refuse? The thousand crowns are yours."

"Thank you, monseigneur."

The duke approached a coffer, in which he plunged his hand, and Poulain advanced behind him.

But the duke only drew from the coffer a small book, on which he wrote in a gigantic and frightful hand:

"Three thousand livres to M. Nicholas Poulain."

It was impossible to understand whether he had given these three thousand livres or whether he owed them.

"It is exactly as if you held the money," he said.

Poulain, who had advanced his hand and leg, drew them back, and that caused him to bow.

"Then it is agreed?" said the duke.

"What is agreed, monseigneur?"

"You will continue to inform me."

Poulain hesitated; it was the office of spy that was imposed on him.

"Well!" said the duke; "this noble devotion, has it already vanished?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Then I may count on you?"

Poulain made an effort.

"You may," he said.

"And I, alone, know all this?"

"You alone; yes, my lord."

"Go, my friend, go; *parfandious!* let M. de Mayenne look to himself."

He pronounced these words as he raised the tapestry to give passage to Poulain. When he had seen the latter

cross the anteroom and disappear, he hastened to the king.

Henry, tired of playing with his dogs, was playing at cup and ball.

D'Epernon assumed a thoughtful and careworn look, which the king, preoccupied with such an important work, did not even notice.

However, as the duke remained silent, the king raised his head, and looked at him for a moment.

"Well," he said to him, "what is the matter now, Lavalette, let us hear—are you dead?"

"Would to God, sire!" replied D'Epernon, "I should not see what I am obliged to see."

"What? my cup and ball?"

"Sire, in a time of great peril, a subject may be alarmed for the safety of his master."

"Danger again? The black devil take you, duke!"

And, with remarkable dexterity, the king caught the ivory ball on the fine point of his cup.

"But you are not aware of what is going on," said the duke.

"Yes, perhaps," said the king.

"Your most cruel enemies surround you at this moment, sire."

"Bah! who are they?"

"The Duchess of Montpensier, in the first place."

"Ah! yes, that is true. She was present at the execution of Salcede, yesterday."

"How you say that!"

"What do I care?"

"You knew it, then?"

"You see I know it, since I tell it to you."

"But that M. de Mayenne would arrive—did you know that also?"

"Yes, since yesterday evening."

"What! this secret," said the duke, disagreeably surprised.

"Are there any secrets for kings, my dear?" said Henry, negligently.

"But who could have informed you?"

"Do you not know that we princes have revelations?"

"Or a police."

"It is the same thing."

"Ah! your majesty has your police, and says nothing about it," said D'Epernon, piqued.

"*Parbleu!* who will love me, if I do not love myself?"

"You wrong me, sire."

"If you are zealous, my dear Lavalette, that is a great virtue; but you are slow, and that is a great defect. Your news would have been very good yesterday at four o'clock, but to-day——"

"Well, sire, to-day?"

"It comes a little late, you will admit."

"It is still too soon, sire, since you are not disposed to listen to me," said D'Epernon.

"I have been listening to you for an hour."

"What! you are threatened, attacked; they prepare ambuscades, and you do not stir?"

"Why should I, since you have given me a guard; and assured me yesterday that my immortality was secured? You knit your brows! ah, ah! Have your forty-five returned to Gascony, or are they no longer worth anything? Is it with these gentlemen as with mules? the day we try them they are all fire; when purchased, they walk backwards."

"Very well, your majesty will see what they are."

"I shall not be sorry to do so; shall I soon see this?"

"Sooner than you probably imagine, sire."

"Ah, you want to frighten me."

"You will see, sire, you will see; by the way, when do you go to Vincennes?"

"To the castle?"

"Yes."

"On Saturday."

"In three days?"

"In three days."

"It is sufficient, sire."

D'Epernon bowed to the king, and left.

In the anteroom, he discovered that he had neglected to relieve M. de Pertinax from his post, but M. de Pertinax had relieved himself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO FRIENDS.

WITH the reader's permission, we will now follow the two young men sent as messengers to Chicot by the king, who was delighted at having his own secrets.

Scarcely were they on horseback when Ernauton and Sainte Maline, determined that one should not get before the other, nearly crushed each other.

The two horses, pushing forward, rubbed the knees of the two horsemen one against the other.

Sainte Maline became purple, Ernauton grew pale.

"You hurt me, monsieur," cried the former, when they had cleared the gate; "do you wish to crush me?"

"You hurt me also," said Ernauton, "only I do not complain."

"You would give me a lesson, I think?"

"I wish to give you nothing at all."

"Ah!" said Sainte Maline, urging his horse so as to be nearer to his companion, "repeat those words."

"Why so?"

"Because I do not understand them."

"You are seeking a quarrel, are you not?" said Ernauton, phlegmatically; "so much the worse for you."

"And why should I seek a quarrel with you? do I know you?" sharply replied Sainte Maline.

"You know me perfectly, monsieur," said Ernauton: "in the first place, because in the country from which we came, my house is but two leagues from yours, and I am well known in the country, being of an old stock; in the next place, because you are furious at seeing me in Paris, when you thought that you alone were sent for; in the last place, because the king gave me the letter to carry."

"Well," exclaimed Sainte Maline, pale with rage; "I accept it all as true. But there is one thing that results from it."

"Which?"

"That I do not like to be with you."

"Leave me, then, if you like; *pardieu!* I do not want to keep you."

"You appear not to understand me."

"On the contrary, I understand you perfectly. You would take the letter from me and carry it yourself. But unfortunately you would have to kill me first."

"Who tells you I have not a mind to do so?"

"To will and to do are two things."

"Descend with me to the water's edge and you will see that with me they are the same thing."

"My dear monsieur, when the king gives me a letter to carry——"

"Well?"

"Well, I carry it."

"I will take it from you by force, coxcomb that you are."

"You will not drive me, I hope, to the necessity of breaking your head, as I would that of a mad dog?"

"You?"

"Undoubtedly; I have a large pistol, you have none."

"Ah! you shall pay me for that," said Sainte Maline, making his horse rear.

"I hope so, really, after my commission is executed."

"Schelm !"

"For the moment, contain yourself, I beg of you, Monsieur de Sainte Maline, for we have the honor of belonging to the king, and we should give a bad opinion of the royal household by stirring up the people. And besides, think what a triumph for the enemies of his majesty, in seeing discord among the defenders of his throne."

Sainte Maline bit his gloves till the blood flowed from his fingers.

"There, there, monsieur," said Ernauton ; "keep your hands to hold the sword when we come to that."

"Oh ! I shall burst," cried Sainte Maline.

"In that case, the work will be already done for me," said Ernauton.

We know not to what extent the still increasing rage of Sainte Maline would have suddenly carried him, had not Ernauton, on crossing the Rue Sainte Antoine, near Saint Paul, seen a litter. He uttered a cry of surprise, and stopped short to look at a woman half veiled.

"My page of yesterday !" he murmured.

The lady gave no indication of having recognized him, but threw herself back in the litter.

"*Cordieu !* you keep me waiting, I think," said Sainte Maline ; "and that to look at the women."

"I beg your pardon, monsieur," said Ernauton, resuming his course.

The young men, from this time, followed at a good trot, the Rue du Faubourg Saint Marceau ; they spoke not a word, not even to quarrel.

Sainte Maline appeared outwardly calm enough ; but, in reality, every muscle in his body trembled with passion.

Besides, he had discovered, and this discovery did not tend to soften him, as we may easily imagine,—he had discovered that, good rider though he was, he could not even follow Ernauton, his horse being very inferior to that of

his companion, and already sweating, though he had not galloped.

This greatly annoyed Sainte Maline ; so that to ascertain positively what his horse could achieve, he kept tormenting him with his whip and spur.

This persistence brought about a quarrel between himself and his horse ; it took place in the environs of the Bièvre. The animal did not put himself to the expense of eloquence, as Ernauton had done, but remembering his origin (he was from Normandy), he brought a suit against his rider, which the latter lost.

He bounded across the road, reared, plunged forward, and bolted towards La Bièvre, where he got rid of his rider, by rolling with him into the river, where they separated.

Sainte Maline's curses might have been heard a mile off, though he was half stifled by the water. When he contrived to get upon his legs, his eyes nearly started from his head, and a few drops of blood, running from his wounded forehead, ran down his face.

Sainte Maline threw a glance round him ; his horse was already some little way off, and the only part of him distinguishable was his tail, which indicated that his head was turned towards the Louvre.

Shaken as he was, covered with mud, soaked to the skin, covered with blood and bruises, Sainte Maline admitted the impossibility of catching his beast ; even to attempt it would have been ridiculous.

It was now that the words he had spoken to Ernauton returned to his mind ; if he would not wait an instant for his companion, in the Rue Saint Antoine, why should his companion oblige him by waiting one or two hours on the road ?

This reflection led Sainte Maline from rage to the most violent despair, especially when he saw, from the spot in which he was incased, the silent Ernauton going down a cross-road which he judged to be a short cut.

Among really passionate men the culminating point of anger is some act of folly; some only reach delirium, others the total prostration of mind and strength.

Sainte Maline mechanically drew out his dagger; for a moment he had the idea of plunging it to the hilt in his bosom. What he suffered at this moment, no one can say, not even himself. The end of such a crisis is death—or if we survive, we are ten years older.

He climbed up the bank of the river, by the aid of his hands and knees, and reached the summit; having reached it, his wandering eye glanced up the road; there was nothing to be seen. To the right, Ernauton had disappeared, doubtless going on his way; his own horse could no longer be seen.

But while he stood there full of sinister thoughts towards Ernauton, the gallop of a horse struck his ear, and coming up the right-hand road taken by Ernauton, he saw a horse and rider.

The rider held another horse by the bridle.

It was the result of M. de Carmainges's chase. He had made a detour, knowing well that to pursue a horse was to double his activity by fright.

He had made a turn to the right, and cut off the passage of the Normand, by waiting for him across a narrow street.

At this sight, Sainte Maline's heart burst with joy; he felt an emotion of gratitude which gave a gentle expression to his countenance; his face gradually clouded again; he had understood all the superiority of Ernauton over himself, for he admitted that in the same situation he should not have thought of acting in a similar manner.

The nobleness of the action conquered him; he felt it, he measured it, and suffered from it.

He stammered out his thanks, to which Ernauton paid no attention, furiously seized the bridle of his horse, and, despite his bruises, got into the saddle.

Ernauton, without saying a word, had preceded him, stroking his horse's neck.

Sainte Maline, we have said, was an excellent horseman; the accident of which he had been the victim was a surprise; after a momentary struggle in which, this time, he had the advantage, he became master of his horse, and put him to a trot.

"Thanks, monsieur," he said a second time to Ernauton, having long consulted his own pride, and the requisitions of society.

Ernauton contented himself with bowing, and touching his hat with his hand.

The way seemed long to Sainte Maline.

Towards half-past two o'clock they observed a man walking with a dog by his side: he was tall, and wore a sword at his side; he was not Chicot, but he had arms and legs worthy of him.

Sainte Maline, still all over mud, could not contain himself; he saw Ernauton pass without taking the least notice of this man. The idea of finding his companion at fault passed like an evil flash through the Gascon's mind; he rode up to the man and accosted him.

"Traveller," he said, "do you expect something?"

The traveller looked at Sainte Maline, whose appearance at this moment, we must confess, was not over agreeable. His features still bore marks of anger, the half-dried mud on his clothes, the half-dried blood on his cheeks, large black frowning eyebrows, a nervous hand stretched towards him, with a menacing gesture, rather than an interrogation, all this looked suspicious to the pedestrian.

"If I expect something," he said, "it is not some one: if I expect some one, it is not you."

"You are very impolite, my master," said Sainte Maline, glad of an opportunity to give vent to his anger, and furious, besides, at having afforded, by his mistake, a fresh triumph to his adversary.

While he spoke, he raised his hand, armed with a switch, to strike the traveller, but the latter lifted his stick, and struck Sainte Maline a sharp blow on the shoulder; he then whistled his dog, which jumped at the horse, and at the rider's thigh, tearing from each place a piece of flesh and a morsel of cloth.

The horse, irritated by the pain, bolted a second time, it is true, but without being able to get rid of his rider, who, despite all his efforts, kept his seat.

Thus carried away, he overtook Ernauton, who saw him pass without even smiling at his misadventure.

When he had contrived to tame his animal, when M. de Carmainges had rejoined him, his pride had not diminished, but impelled him to attempt a compromise.

"Well! well!" he said, forcing a smile, "I am in one of my unlucky days, it seems; this man, however, greatly resembled the person described to us by his majesty."

Ernauton remained silent.

"I am speaking to you, monsieur," said Sainte Maline, exasperated by this coolness; which he rightly considered a proof of contempt, and which he was determined to end by some definitive *éclat*, should it even cost him his life. "I am speaking to you, do you not hear?"

"The person his majesty described to us," replied Ernauton, "had neither dog nor stick."

"It's true," said Sainte Maline, "and if I had reflected I should have one bruise the less on my shoulder, and two marks less on my thigh. It is good to be prudent and calm, I see."

Ernauton made no reply; but rising in his stirrups and placing his hand over his eyes to obtain a longer range of vision, he said,

"Yonder is the person we seek, waiting for us."

"*Peste!* monsieur," said Sainte Maline, gruffly, jealous of his companion's third triumph; "you have good eyes. As for me, I can distinguish nothing but a black speck, and that with difficulty."

Ernauton, without reply, continued to advance. Very soon Sainte Maline could see and recognize the man described by the king. An evil impulse seized him—he pushed his horse forward to arrive first.

Ernauton waited; looked at him without a threat, and with apparent inattention. This glance brought Sainte Maline to himself, and he put his horse to the usual pace.

CHAPTER XXX.

SAINTE MALINE.

ERNAUTON was not deceived, the man indicated was really Chicot. He was also blessed with good sight and good hearing; he had seen and heard the horsemen at some distance. Suspecting that they came for him, he waited for them.

When he became certain of this, and saw the two horsemen directing their steps towards him, he placed his hand, without affectation, on the handle of his long sword, as if to take a noble attitude.

Ernauton and Sainte Maline looked at each other for a moment, both silent.

“Speak, monsieur, if you wish,” said Ernauton bowing to his adversary; under these circumstances, the word adversary is more consistent than companion.

Sainte Maline was suffocated; the surprise of this courtesy almost choked him. He only replied by bending his head. Ernauton saw that he remained silent, and spoke first.

“Monsieur,” said he to Chicot, “this gentleman and I are your servants.”

Chicot bowed, with his most gracious smile.

“Would it be indiscreet,” continued the young man, “to inquire your name?”

"I am called the Shade, monsieur," replied Chicot.

"You expect something?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You will be good enough, perhaps, to tell us what you expect?"

"I expect a letter."

"You understand our curiosity, monsieur? It means nothing offensive towards you."

Chicot again bowed, and his smile became more and more gracious.

"From what place do you expect this letter?" continued Ernauton.

"From the Louvre."

"Sealed with what seal?"

"With the royal seal."

Ernauton put his hand in his bosom.

"You would recognize this letter no doubt?" he said to him.

"Yes, if I saw it."

Ernauton drew the letter from his bosom.

"That is it," said Chicot; "and for greater safety, you are aware that I must give you something in exchange for it."

"A receipt."

"Just so."

"Monsieur," replied Ernauton, "I was told by the king to carry this letter, but monsieur was to deliver it."

And he presented the letter to Sainte Maline, who took it, and placed it in the hands of Chicot.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said the latter.

"You see," said Ernauton, "that we have faithfully fulfilled our mission; there is no one on the road, no one, therefore, has seen us speak to you, or give you the letter."

"It is true, gentlemen, and I shall bear witness to it if necessary. It is now my turn."

"The receipt," said the two young men together.

"To which of the two am I to deliver it?"

"The king did not say!" exclaimed Sainte Maline, looking steadily at his companion.

"Write two, monsieur," replied Ernauton, "and give one to each of us; it is far from here to the Louvre, and some accident may happen to one of us on the road."

As he spoke these words, Ernauton's eyes sparkled like a flash of lightning.

"You are a prudent man, monsieur," said Chicot to Ernauton.

And he drew his tablets from his pocket, tore off two leaves, and wrote upon each of them:

"Received from the hands of M. Rene de Sainte Maline, the letter brought by M. Ernauton de Carmainges.

"THE SHADE."

"Adieu, monsieur," said Sainte Maline, taking his receipt.

"Adieu, monsieur, and a pleasant journey to you," added Ernauton; "have you anything else to send to the Louvre?"

"Absolutely nothing, many thanks," said Chicot.

Ernauton and Sainte Maline turned their horses' heads towards Paris, and Chicot departed at a pace that the best mule would have envied.

When Chicot had disappeared, Ernauton, who had scarcely gone a hundred paces, suddenly stopped his horse, and addressing Sainte Maline:

"Now, monsieur, let us dismount, if you please."

"And why, monsieur?" said Sainte Maline with astonishment.

"Our task is accomplished, and we have a few words to say to each other. The spot appears excellent for an interview like ours."

"As you please, monsieur," said Sainte Maline, dismounting from his horse, as his companion had already done.

When he had put his foot on the ground, Ernauton approached and said to him :

"You know, monsieur, that without any provocation on my part, and without any reason on yours, in fact without any cause, you have grievously offended me during the journey. There is more ; you wished to make me fight at an inopportune time, and I refused. But now, the time is good, and I am your man."

Sainte Maline listened to the words with a gloomy countenance and knitted brows ; but Sainte Maline not being in the towering passion which had driven him beyond all bounds, Sainte Maline no longer wished to fight. Reflection had brought him to his senses ; he realized all the inferiority of his position.

"Monsieur," he replied, after a moment's silence, "when I insulted you, you replied by rendering me a service ; I can no longer use the language towards you that I did then."

Ernauton frowned.

"No, monsieur, but you think now what you said then."

"How do you know?"

"Because all your words were dictated by hatred and envy ; and in the last two hours since you pronounced them this hatred and this envy cannot be extinct in your heart."

Sainte Maline blushed, but did not answer.

Ernauton waited a moment and continued :

"If the king preferred me to you, it was because my features pleased him better than yours ; if I was not thrown into the Bièvre, it was because I ride better than you ; if I did not accept your challenge at the moment it pleased you to make it, it was because I had more prudence ; if I was not bitten by the man's dog, it was because I had more sagacity ; lastly, if I summon you at this hour to do me justice and draw the sword, it is because I have more real honor, and, take care, if you hesitate, I shall add, more courage."

Sainte Maline shuddered, and his eyes flashed ; all the evil passions to which Ernauton had referred were reflected in turn on his livid countenance ; at the last word of the young man, he drew his sword furiously.

Ernauton already held his in his hand.

“Stay, monsieur,” said Sainte Maline ; “withdraw the last word you have spoken ; it is one too many, you will acknowledge, you who know me so well, since, as you said, we reside within two leagues of each other ; withdraw it ; be satisfied with my humiliation, do not dishonor me.”

“Monsieur,” said Ernauton, “as I never allow myself to get into a rage, I never say more than I mean, consequently I shall withdraw nothing at all. I also am sensitive, and being newly at court I do not wish to have to blush every time I meet you. A stroke of the sword, if you please, monsieur ; it is for my satisfaction as well as your own.”

“Oh ! monsieur, I have fought eleven times,” said Sainte Maline, with a sombre smile ; “and of my eleven adversaries, two are dead ; you know that also, I presume ?”

“And I, monsieur, have never fought,” replied Ernauton, “for I have never had occasion ; I find one to suit me, though not of my seeking. I wait your good pleasure, monsieur.”

“Stay,” said Sainte Maline, shaking his head, “we are countrymen, we are both in the king’s service, let us quarrel no more. You are a brave man, and I would even offer you my hand, if that were not almost impossible. What would you have ? I show myself to you as I am, ulcered to my heart ; it is not my fault. I am envious, what would you have me do ? Nature created me in an evil day. M. de Chalabre, or M. de Moncrabeau, or M. de Pincornay, would not have made me angry ; it is your superior merit that worries me ; console yourself for it, since my envy cannot injure you, and unfortunately for me, your merit remains. Let us stop this. I

should suffer too much if you mentioned the cause of our quarrel."

"Our quarrel,—no one will know of it, monsieur."

"No one?"

"No, monsieur, for if we fight, I shall kill you, or be killed. I am not one of those who despise life; on the contrary, I cling to it. I am twenty-three years of age, possess a good name; I am not precisely poor. I hope in myself, and in the future; and be assured, I shall defend myself like a lion."

"Well! I, on the contrary, am already thirty, and sufficiently disgusted with life, for I believe neither in the future, nor in myself. But, however, disgusted with life, and incredulous of the future, I would rather not fight with you."

"In that case you will apologize," said Ernauton.

"No, I have done enough and said enough. If you are not content, so much the better, for in that case you will cease to be superior to me."

"I shall remind you, monsieur, that we do not thus terminate a quarrel without exposing ourselves to be laughed at, when we are both Gascons."

"That is exactly what I expect," said Sainte Maline.

"You expect?"

"A laugh. Oh! how I shall enjoy that moment!"

"Then, you refuse to fight."

"I do not wish to fight with you, be it understood."

"After having insulted me?"

"I admit it."

"But, monsieur, suppose my patience leaves me, and I attack you with my sword?"

Sainte Maline clutched his hands convulsively.

"Well! so much the better; I shall throw away my sword."

"Take care; in that event, I shall not strike you with the point."

"Good, for I shall then have reason to hate you, and I

shall hate you mortally and some day, the first time I find you in the wrong, I shall catch you, as you have now caught me, and I shall take your life—from despair.”

Ernauton sheathed his sword.

“You are a strange man,” he said, “and I pity you from the bottom of my heart.”

“You pity me?”

“Yes, for you must suffer horribly.”

“Horribly.”

“Do you never love?”

“Never.”

“Have you no passions?”

“Only one.”

“Jealousy, you have told me.”

“Yes, which proves that I have them all to an indescribable degree of shame and misfortune. I adore a woman the moment she loves another. I love gold when another hand touches it. I am always proud from comparison. I drink to warm me into anger and to render it sharp when it is only chronic; to force it to burst, and burn like a thunderbolt. Ah! yes, yes, you are right, Monsieur de Carmainges, I am unfortunate.”

“You have never endeavored to become good?” demanded Ernauton.

“I have not succeeded.”

“What do you hope? What do you think of doing?”

“What does the poisonous plant do? It has flowers like other plants, and certain individuals know how to turn it to a use. What do the bear, and the bird of prey? they bite; but certain breeders know how to train them for the chase. This is what I am, and what I shall be, probably, in the hands of M. d’Epernon and M. de Loignac, until the day when they will say: ‘This plant is noxious, root it up; this brute is mad, kill him.’”

Ernauton had calmed himself by degrees. Sainte Maline was no longer an object of anger, but of study; he almost

felt pity for this man, whom circumstances had driven to make such singular avowals.

"A great fortune, which you might acquire, having great qualities, would cure you," he said; "develop yourself in the way of your instincts, Monsieur de Sainte Maline, and you will succeed in the ranks or in intrigue; and then, being enabled to govern, you will hate less."

"However high I should rise, however deeply I take root, there will always be above me superior fortunes that will wound me; below me, sardonic laughter that will rend my ears."

"I pity you," repeated Ernauton.

And here it ended.

Ernauton went to his horse, which he had fastened to a tree, and, untying him, placed himself in the saddle.

Sainte Maline had not quitted the bridle of his. They both took the road to Paris, the one silent and sombre from what he had heard, the other from what he had said.

Suddenly Ernauton held out his hand to Sainte Maline.

"Shall I try to cure you?" he said to him; "come."

"Not a word more," said Sainte Maline; "no, no, do not attempt that, you would fail. Hate me, on the contrary, and I shall admire you."

"Once more, I pity you," said Ernauton.

In about an hour the two horsemen re-entered the Louvre, and directed their steps towards the lodging of the forty-five.

The king had gone out, and would not return until evening.

CHAPTER XXXI.

M. DE LOIGNAC'S ADDRESS TO THE FORTY-FIVE.

EACH of the young men placed himself at the window of his little lodge, to watch for the king's return. Each one had placed himself there with different ideas.

Sainte Maline full of hatred, shame, ambition ; his brow knitted, his heart on fire.

Ernauton, already forgetful of all that had passed, was absorbed in a single thought, wondering who could be that woman he had introduced into Paris as his page, and whom he had again encountered in a splendid litter.

Here was ample food for thought, with a heart more disposed to amorous adventures than to making ambitious calculations.

Ernauton buried himself by degrees in his reflections, and so deeply that on suddenly raising his head he perceived that Sainte Maline was no longer there.

A thought flashed through his mind : less preoccupied than himself, Sainte Maline had watched the return of the king ; the king had returned, and Sainte Maline was with him.

He rose hastily, crossed the gallery, and arrived at the king's room just as Sainte Maline was leaving it.

"Look," said he, joyfully, to Ernauton, "see what the king has given me !" And he showed a gold chain.

"Accept my compliments, monsieur," said Ernauton, without betraying the least emotion.

And he entered the king's chamber in turn.

Sainte Maline expected some manifestation of jealousy

on the part of Carmainges; he remained stupefied at this calmness, and awaited Ernauton's return.

The latter remained about ten minutes with the king. These ten minutes were ages for Sainte Maline.

At length he came out. Sainte Maline was at the same spot; with one glance he examined his companion, his heart dilated. Ernauton brought out nothing, at least nothing visible.

"And you?" demanded Sainte Maline, pursuing his thoughts, "what has the king given you, monsieur?"

"His hand to kiss," replied Ernauton, smiling.

Sainte Maline grasped his chain between his hands so nervously that he broke a link.

They both wended their way in silence towards the lodging.

As they entered the hall the trumpet sounded. At this signal each of the forty-five left their cells, like bees from their hives.

Each man wondered what had happened, and profited, by this general reunion, to admire the change that had taken place in the person and exterior of his companions.

The majority of them were richly dressed but in bad taste, lack of elegance being compensated by gaudiness.

Besides, they had what D'Epernon, who was a skilful politician if a bad soldier, had sought; some had youth, others strength, others experience, and this rectified among all, at least one imperfection.

Altogether they resembled a corps of officers in civilian garb, the military cut (with very few exceptions) being what they most affected.

Thus, long swords, jingling spurs, curled mustaches, boots, and doeskin or leather gloves, the whole well gilt, pomaded, and ribboned, to make an appearance, as they said; this was the instinctive exterior adopted by the greater number.

The most discreet appeared in sombre colors, the most economical might be known by the substantial quality of

their cloth, and the most gay by their white or rose-colored satin and laces.

Perducas de Pincornay had found, at some Jew's, a gilt steel chain as thick as a prison chain.

Pertinax de Moncrabeau was all bows and embroidery. He had purchased his costume from a tradesman of the Rue des Haudriettes, who had received a gentleman wounded by robbers; the gentleman had sent to his own house for other garments, and recognizing the hospitality received, he had given the merchant his coat, somewhat soiled with dirt and blood. The merchant had had the stains taken out, and the coat remained very presentable, but for the two holes made by the daggers of the robbers. Pertinax had had these two places embroidered with gold, and changed a defect into an ornament.

Eustache de Miradoux did not shine; he had to rig out Lardille, Militor, and the two children. Lardille had chosen a costume as rich as the sumptuary laws of the period permitted women to wear; Militor, covered with velvet and damask, had bedecked himself with a silver chain, a plumed hat, and embroidered stockings, so that there only remained to the poor Eustache a sum barely sufficient to keep him out of rags.

M. de Chalabre had retained his iron-gray doublet, which a tailor had cleaned and lined afresh; a few bands of velvet, skilfully sewed on here and there, gave an additional lustre to this invaluable garment. M. de Chalabre pretended that he wished to change his doublet but that, despite the most minute search, he had found it impossible to find better or more becoming cloth.

In addition, he had been to the expense of a pair of dark scarlet breeches, boots, a cloak, and hat, the whole harmonious to the eye, as is generally the case in the dress of the miser. As to his arms, they were irreproachable. Being an old soldier, he had found an excellent Spanish sword, a well-made dagger, and a perfect gorget. This was a saving of ruffs.

All the gentlemen were there, admiring one another, when M. de Loignac entered, frowning; he made them form the circle, and placed himself in the middle of this circle, with a countenance anything but agreeable.

It is hardly necessary to observe that every eye was fixed upon the chief.

"Gentlemen," he said, "are you all here?"

"All," replied forty-five voices, with a unity which promised much for their future manœuvres.

"Gentlemen," continued Loignac, "you have been summoned to serve as a special guard to the king; it is an honorable title, but demands a great deal."

Loignac made a pause, which was filled up by a soft murmur of satisfaction.

"Many of you, however, do not appear to me to have perfectly understood your duties; I will recall them to you."

They all opened their ears; evidently they were anxious to know their duties, if not eager to fulfil them.

"You must not imagine, gentlemen, that the king enrolls and pays you to act like coxcombs, and to distribute, here and there at your caprice, a scratch or a bite; discipline is urgent, although it remains secret, and you are an assembly of gentlemen, who ought to be the most obedient and the most devoted in the kingdom."

The assembly scarcely breathed, it was easily seen from this solemn beginning that the end would be serious.

"From to-day you will live in the intimacy of the Louvre; that is, in the very laboratory of the government. If you do not assist at all its deliberations, you will be frequently chosen to execute its orders; you are, then, in the position of those officers who carry in themselves not only the responsibility of a secret, but also the influence of the executive power."

A second murmur of satisfaction ran through the ranks of the Gascons; heads were held up, as if pride had raised these men several inches in height.

"Suppose now," continued Loignac, "that one of these officers, upon whom at times reposes the safety of the state, or the tranquillity of the crown, suppose, I say, that an officer betrays the secret of the council, or that a soldier, charged with a commission neglects to execute it; his life is the forfeit; you know that?"

"Undoubtedly," replied several voices.

"Well, gentlemen," pursued Loignac, with a terrible accent, "this very day a measure of his majesty's has been betrayed, and a step which he wished to take rendered probably impossible."

Terror began to take the place of pride and admiration. The forty-five looked at each other with distrust and suspicion.

"Two of you, gentlemen, have been surprised in open day, chattering like two old women, and throwing to the winds words so serious that each of them now may strike a man and kill him."

Sainte Maline immediately advanced towards M. de Loignac, and said to him:

"Monsieur, I believe I have the honor of speaking to you in the name of my comrades; it is important that you no longer allow suspicions to rest upon all the king's servants. Speak at once, if you please, that we may know how to act, and that the good may not be confounded with the bad."

"That is not difficult," said Loignac.

The attention increased twofold.

"The king was notified to-day that one of his enemies, precisely one of those against whom you are called upon to combat, was to arrive in Paris to beard him or conspire against him.

"The name of this enemy was pronounced secretly, but was overheard by a sentinel, that is, by a man who ought to be looked upon as a wall, deaf, dumb, and immovable. However, this man, in the open street, repeated the name of this enemy of the king's with a noise and boasting that

attracted the attention of the passers-by, and raised quite a commotion. I know it myself, for I followed the same road as this man, and heard the whole with my own ears. Had I not placed my hand upon his shoulder, to stop him, he would, in a few words more, have compromised so many sacred interests, that I should have been compelled to stab him on the spot, if, at my first warning, he had not remained silent."

At this moment Pertinax de Moncrabeau and Perducas de Pincornay turned deadly pale, and fell back, nearly fainting, one against the other.

Moncrabeau, though trembling, tried to stammer out a few excuses.

The moment the two culprits thus denounced themselves, all eyes were fixed upon them.

"Nothing can justify you, monsieur," said Loignac to Moncrabeau; "if you were drunk, you ought to be punished for having been drinking; if you were only boastful and vain, you ought still to be punished."

There was a terrible silence. M. de Loignac had, we may remember, begun by announcing a severity which promised painful results.

"In consequence," continued Loignac, "M. de Moncrabeau, and you also, M. de Pincornay, will be punished."

"Pardon us, monsieur," replied Pertinax; "but we are provincials new to the court and unaccustomed to politics."

"You must not accept the honor of being in his majesty's service, without weighing the responsibility of the service."

"For the future we will be as mute as sepulchres. This we swear."

"All this is very good, gentlemen; but will you repair to-morrow the fault you have committed to-day?"

"We will try."

"Impossible, I tell you, impossible!"

"Then, for this once, pardon us, monsieur."

"You live," continued Loignac, without directly an-

swering the prayer of the two culprits, "in an apparent license, which I will repress by strict discipline. Understand this well, gentlemen! Those who find the conditions too hard, may go. I shall not be embarrassed for volunteers to replace them."

No one replied; but many a brow was furrowed.

"Consequently, gentlemen," resumed Loignac, "it is right that you should be forewarned of this; justice will be done among us secretly, expeditiously. Without writing, without trial, traitors will be punished with death, on the instant. There are all sorts of precedents for this, and no one will have anything to say against it. Suppose, for instance that M. de Monterabeau and M. de Pincornay, instead of conversing amicably in the street of things they ought to forget, had had a dispute about things which they had a right to remember. Well, might not this dispute bring on a duel between M. de Pincornay and M. de Monterabeau? In a duel it sometimes happens that we cleave our adversary and are run through at the very same moment; the morning after the dispute the two gentlemen would be found dead at the Pré-aux-Clercs as MM. de Quelus, Schomberg, and De Maugiron, were found dead at the Tournelles. The affair is talked about as a duel should be, and there is the end of it. Therefore, gentlemen, you understand, whoever betrays the king's secrets will be killed in a duel or otherwise."

Monterabeau fainted away completely, and leaned upon his companion, whose paleness became more and more livid, and whose teeth closed like a vise.

"For lesser faults," resumed Loignac, "I shall have milder punishments, as imprisonments for instance; I shall make use of it when it will more severely punish the guilty than deprive the king.

"To-day I spare the lives of M. de Monterabeau who spoke, and of M. de Pincornay who listened. I pardon them, I say, because they probably acted in ignorance. I do not punish them with imprisonment because I might

require their services to night or to-morrow morning. I reserve for them, therefore, the third punishment. I mean to employ against delinquents a fine."

At the word fine, M. de Chalabre's fox-like face grew longer.

"You have received a thousand livres apiece, gentlemen, you will each return a hundred, and this money will be used to reward those whose conduct I approve."

"A hundred livres," replied De Pincornay, "why, *Cap de Bious!* I no longer have these hundred livres; I have spent them on my equipment."

"You will sell your chain," said Loignac.

"I am willing to yield it for the king's service," said Pincornay.

"No, monsieur; the king does not purchase his subjects' effects to pay their fines; sell yourself, and pay yourself. I have one word to add," said Loignac.

"I have observed many signs of irritation between several members of this company; every time a difference arises I wish the matter referred to me, and I alone will assume the right of judging of the gravity of the difference, and ordering a duel if I consider the duel to be necessary. I know that duelling is much the fashion in these days, but I do not wish my company to follow the fashion and be continually diminishing and incomplete. The first duel, the first challenge, that shall take place without my knowledge shall be punished with a rigorous imprisonment, a heavy fine, or even with a punishment still more severe, if the case should cause great damage to the service.

"Let those to whom these words apply, bear them in mind; you may go, gentlemen.

"By the way, fifteen of you will place yourselves to-night at the foot of the staircase when his majesty receives, and on the first sign you will occupy if necessary the antechamber. Fifteen will remain outside, without any ostensible mission, mingling in the train of those

who may arrive at the Louvre; the other fifteen, lastly, will remain at their lodgings."

"Monsieur," said Sainte Maline, approaching, "permit me not to give advice, God forbid! but to ask for an explanation. Every good troop must be well commanded; how shall we act in unison if we have no chief?"

"And what am I, then?" said Loignac.

"You are our general, monsieur."

"Not I, you are mistaken; it is M. d'Epéron."

"You are our brigadier, then, in that case it is not enough, and we must have an officer for each squad of fifteen men."

"That is just," replied Loignac, "and I cannot divide myself into three parts daily, yet I should not wish to have among you any superiority save that of merit."

"Oh! as to that, monsieur, should you deny it, it will appear of itself, and by the work you will know the difference, if in the *ensemble* none should appear."

"I shall institute, then, officers for the day," said Loignac, after reflecting for a moment on Sainte Maline's words; "with the password I shall give the name of the chief. By these means each in his turn will learn to obey and command, but as yet I do not know the capacities of any one; these capacities must be developed, for me to make a choice. I shall look about and judge."

Sainte Maline bowed, and returned to the ranks.

"But you understand," continued Loignac, "I have divided you into squads of fifteen. You know your numbers; the first on the stairs, the second in the court, the third in the lodging; the latter in half-dress, and the sword by the bedside, that is, ready to march at the first signal. Now go, gentlemen."

"Monsieur de Monterabeau and M. de Pincornay, tomorrow you will pay your fine; I am treasurer; go."

They all left save Ernauton de Carmainges, who alone remained.

"You desire something, monsieur?" demanded Loignac.

"Yes, monsieur," said Ernauton, bowing; "it appears to me you have forgotten to state what we shall have to do. To be in the king's service has a glorious sound, no doubt, but I should like to know in what this service consists?"

"This, monsieur," replied Loignac, "constitutes a delicate question, which I cannot answer."

"May I be bold enough to ask why?"

These questions were addressed to M. de Loignac with such exquisite politeness, that, contrary to his custom, M. de Loignac vainly searched for a severe reply.

"Because I myself am often ignorant in the morning of what I may have to do before night."

"Monsieur," said Carmainges, "you are placed in such a high position with regard to us, that you must know many things of which we are ignorant."

"Do as I have done, Monsieur de Carmainges; learn things without being told them; I do not hinder you."

"I appeal to you, monsieur," said Ernauton, "because, having come to court without friendships or hatreds, and being guided by no individual passion, I may, without being of more value, at the same time be of more use than another."

"You have neither friendships nor hatreds?"

"No, monsieur."

"You love the king? at least so I suppose."

"I ought to, and I wish to, Monsieur de Loignac, as a subject, and as a gentleman."

"Well! that is one of the cardinal points by which you ought to regulate your conduct. If you are a skilful man, it should help you to discover who is opposed to him."

"Very well, monsieur," replied Ernauton, bowing, "and I am decided. There remains one point, however, which causes me much uneasiness."

"What is it?"

"Passive obedience."

"It is the first condition."

"I understand perfectly, monsieur; passive obedience is sometimes difficult for men who are somewhat delicate on points of honor."

"That does not concern me, Monsieur de Carmainges," replied Loignac.

"But, monsieur, when an order displeases you?"

"I read the signature of M. d'Epernon, and that consoles me."

"And M. d'Epernon?"

"M. d'Epernon reads the signature of his majesty, and consoles himself as I do."

"You are right, monsieur," said Ernauton, "and I am your humble servant."

Ernauton made a step to retire. Loignac detained him.

"You have awakened in me certain ideas," he said, "and I will tell you things I would not say to others, because those others have not had the courage to speak to me as you have done."

Ernauton bowed.

"Monsieur," said Loignac, approaching the young man, "a great personage may perhaps arrive to-night. Do not lose sight of him, and follow him wherever he goes, on leaving the Louvre."

"Pardon me, monsieur, for saying so, but this seems to me the work of a spy."

"A spy! do you think so?" said Loignac, coldly; "it is possible; but look."

He drew from his doublet a paper, which he handed to Carmainges; the latter unfolded it and read:

"Have M. de Mayenne followed to-night, if by chance he dare present himself at the Louvre."

"Signed?" inquired Loignac.

"Signed by D'Epernon," read Carmainges.

"Well, monsieur?"

"Very well," replied Ernauton, bowing low, "I will follow M. de Mayenne."

And he retired.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MESSIEURS THE BOURGEOIS OF PARIS.

M. DE MAYENNE, about whom they were so much concerned at the Louvre, but who was so little aware of it, left the Hôtel de Guise by a back door; and booted and spurred, as though just arrived from a journey, he repaired to the Louvre with three gentlemen.

M. d'Epemon, notified of his arrival, sent to announce his visit to the king.

M. de Loignac, also informed of it, had sent a second notice to the forty-five; fifteen, therefore, placed themselves, as agreed, in the antechambers, fifteen in the court, and fourteen in the lodging.

We say fourteen, because Ernauton, having, as we are aware, received a private mission, was not among his companions.

But as M. de Mayenne's suite was not of a nature to inspire any fears, the second company received permission to return to their barrack.

M. de Mayenne, conducted before his majesty, made him a respectful visit, and was received by the king with apparent friendliness.

"Well, my cousin," asked the king, "you have come to visit Paris?"

"Yes, sire," said Mayenne; "I thought it my duty to come, in my brother's name and my own, to remind your majesty that you have no subjects more faithful than ourselves."

"*Mordieu!*" said Henry, "the thing is so well known, that, apart from the pleasure your visit gives me, you

might, in truth, have spared yourself this little journey. You must certainly have had some other motive."

"Sire, I have feared that your consideration for the house of Guise might be affected by the strange reports which our enemies have circulated for some time past."

"What reports?" said the king, with that good-nature which made him so dangerous, even to those most intimate with him.

"What!" exclaimed Mayenne, a little disconcerted; "your majesty has heard no unfavorable reports concerning us?"

"Cousin," said the king, "understand, once for all, that I do not permit any one here to speak ill of Messieurs de Guise; and as they know this better than you appear to know it, they do not mention them, duke."

"In that case, sire," said Mayenne, "I shall not regret having come, since I have the pleasure of seeing my sovereign, and of finding him so well disposed towards us; but I will confess that my precipitation was groundless."

"Oh! duke, Paris is a good city, where there is always something to do," said the king.

"Yes, sire, but we have our affairs at Soissons."

"What affairs, duke?"

"Your majesty's, sire."

"Ah, true, true, Mayenne, continue to do as you have begun. I know how to appreciate and reward, as I should, the conduct of my subjects."

The duke retired, smiling.

The king re-entered his chamber, rubbing his hands.

Loignac made a sign to Ernauton, who said a word to his valet, and prepared to follow the four cavaliers.

The valet ran to the stables, and Ernauton followed on foot.

There was no danger of losing M. de Mayenne; Perducas de Pincornay's indiscretion had made known the arrival in Paris of a prince of the house of Guise. At this news,

the good Leaguers had begun to pour from their houses, and follow him.

Mayenne was not difficult to recognize, with his broad shoulders, his stout figure, and his beard *en écuelle*, as L'Etoile says.

They had followed him, therefore, to the gates of the Louvre, and there the same companions awaited his reappearance to accompany him to the door of his hotel.

In vain did Mayneville drive back the most zealous by saying to them :

"Not so much zeal, my friends, not so much zeal ; *vrai Dieu !* you will compromise us."

The duke had an escort of not less than two or three hundred men, when he reached the Hôtel Saint Denis, where he had fixed his residence.

This was a great assistance to Ernauton in following the duke without being noticed.

Just as the duke entered, and was turning round to bow, Carmainges thought he recognized in one of the gentlemen who saluted at the same time, the cavalier who accompanied the page whom he had contrived to introduce into Paris through the Porte Saint Antoine, and who had shown so strange a curiosity at the Place de Grève during the execution of Salcede.

Almost at the same moment, and just as Mayenne disappeared, a litter cut through the crowd. Mayneville went to meet it. One of the curtains was drawn aside, and, thanks to a ray of moonlight, Ernauton fancied he recognized not only his page, but the lady of the Porte Saint Antoine.

Mayneville and the lady exchanged a few words, the litter disappeared beneath the porch of the hotel ; Mayneville followed the litter and the door closed.

A moment later Mayneville appeared on the balcony, thanked the Parisians in the duke's name, and as it was getting late he invited them to seek their homes in order

that malevolence might extract no harm from their assembling.

All dispersed upon this invitation, with the exception of ten men who had entered in the duke's suite.

Ernauton withdrew with the others, or rather while the others dispersed, he pretended to follow their example.

The ten chosen ones, who had remained at the exclusion of the others, were the deputies of the League, sent to M. de Mayenne to thank him for his visit, but at the same time to entreat him to persuade his brother to come also.

In fact the worthy bourgeois, of whom we have already had a glimpse the night of the cuirasses, these worthy bourgeois who were not wanting in imagination, had in their preparatory meetings combined a number of plans which needed only the sanction and support of a chief on whom they could rely.

Bussy Leclerc came to announce that he had exercised three convents in the use of weapons, and had enrolled five hundred bourgeois; that is to say, had got ready an effective force of one thousand men.

Lachapelle Marteau had worked among the magistrates, the clerks, and all the people of the palace. He could offer both counsel and action; the counsel represented by two hundred black robes, and the latter by two hundred archers.

Brigard had the merchants of the Rue des Lombards, the pillars of the market halls and of the Rue Saint Denis.

Crucé shared the lawyers with Lachapelle Marteau, and in addition, disposed of the university.

Delbar offered all the sailors and people of the port, a dangerous lot, forming a contingent of five hundred men.

Louchard disposed of five hundred jockeys and horse-dealers, all mad Catholics.

A pewterer, named Pollard, and a pork butcher named

Gilbert, presented fifteen hundred butchers and pork-sellers of the city and suburbs.

Maitre Nicholas Poulain, Chicot's friend, offered everything and everybody.

When the duke, safely immured in a secure apartment, had listened to these revelations and offers,

"I admire the strength of the League," he said: "but I do not see the object you propose to yourselves."

Maitre Lachapelle Marteau immediately prepared to deliver a speech in three parts; he was known to be very prolix, Mayenne shuddered.

"Let us be brief," he said.

Bussy Leclerc cut short Marteau's speech.

"Here it is," he said; "we are anxious for a change. We are the strongest, and therefore we will have this change; this is short, clear and precise."

"But," demanded Mayenne, "how will you act to obtain this change?"

"It seems to me," said Bussy Leclerc, with that boldness of speech which, in a man of lowly birth, might pass for audacity, "it seems to me, that as the idea of the Union came from our chiefs, it is for them and not for us, to point out its aim."

"Gentlemen," replied Mayenne, "you are perfectly right; the aim ought to be indicated by those who have the honor of being your chiefs, but this is the time to repeat to you that the general should judge of the proper time for action; that having seen his troops ranged, armed, and animated, he does not give the signal to charge until he thinks fit."

"But, in fact, monseigneur," replied Crucé, "the League is impatient; we have already had the honor of telling you so."

"Impatient for what, Monsieur Crucé?" demanded Mayenne.

"Why, to arrive."

"At what?"

"At our object; we also have a plan of our own."

"In that case it is different," said Mayenne; "if you have your own plan, I have nothing more to say."

"Yes, monseigneur, but may we count on your support?"

"Without doubt, if this plan suits my brother and myself."

"It is probable, monseigneur, that it will be agreeable to you."

"Let us know the plan, then."

The Leaguers looked at one another; two or three made a sign to Lachapelle Marteau to speak.

Lachapelle Marteau advanced, and appeared to solicit the duke's permission to explain himself.

"Speak," said the duke.

"Here it is, monseigneur," said Marteau. "It occurred to Leclerc, Crucé and myself; we have deeply meditated, and it is probable that the success is certain."

"To the point, Monsieur Marteau; to the point."

"There are several points, which unite among them all the strength of the city: the great and the little Chatelet, the palace of the Temple, the Hôtel de Ville, the Arsenal and the Louvre."

"It is true," said the duke.

"All these points are defended by resident garrisons, but could easily be surprised, because they cannot expect a *coup de main*."

"I also admit this," said the duke.

"The city, however, is further defended; first by the knight of the watch with his archers, who guard the places most in danger, and form the real defence of Paris."

"We thought of seizing at his house the knight of the watch who resides at the Couture Sainte Catharine. The surprise might be easily effected, the spot being lonely and deserted."

Mayenne shook his head.

"Deserted and lonely as it is," he said, "you cannot

force a door and fire twenty shots without attracting attention."

"We have provided against this objection, monseigneur," said Marteau; "one of the archers of the watch is on our side. In the middle of the night; two or three of us will go and knock at the door; the archer will open, he will go to the knight, and inform him that his majesty wishes to speak to him. There will be nothing strange in this; once a month, for instance the king sends to this officer for his reports and expedition. The door being thus opened, we will introduce ten men—sailors who lodge near—who will soon dispatch him."

"Cut his throat, you mean?"

"Yes, monseigneur. The first means of defense are thus intercepted. It is true that other magistrates, other functionaries, might be apprised by the trembling or political bourgeois; there is M. the President, there is M. d'O, there is M. de Chiverny, M. the procureur Laguesle; well! we shall force their doors at the same hour. Saint Bartholomew has taught us how to accomplish this, and we shall treat them as we shall treat M. the Chevalier of the Watch."

"Oh! oh!" said the duke, who thought the matter serious.

"This will be an excellent opportunity, monseigneur, to attack the politicians, all designated in our quarters, and to get rid of all the religious heretics and the political heretics."

"All this is very well, gentlemen," said Mayenne; "but you have not told me if you mean at the same time, to force the door of the Louvre, that strong fortress where gentlemen and guards are always watching. The king, timid as he is, will not permit his throat to be cut like the chevalier of the watch. He will take a sword in his hand, and, remember this, he is the king; his presence will have a strong effect on the citizens, and you will be beaten."

"We have chosen four thousand men for this undertaking, monseigneur ; and four thousand men who do not love the Valois enough for his presence to have on them the effect you anticipate."

"You think that will be sufficient?"

"No doubt, we shall be ten to one," said Bussy Leclerc.

"Why, the Swiss are four thousand strong, gentlemen."

"Yes, but they are at Lagny, and Lagny is eight leagues from Paris ; supposing the king might be enabled to apprise them, it would take two hours for the messenger to reach there on horseback, eight hours for the Swiss to make the journey on foot. This would make ten hours, and they would arrive just in time to be stopped at the barriers, for in ten hours we should be masters of the whole city."

"Well! very good, I admit all this. The chevalier of the watch slaughtered, the politicians destroyed, the authorities of the city disappeared, every obstacle in fact removed ; you have, of course, arranged what you mean to do after that."

"We will form a government of honest men," said Brigard ; "as for ourselves, so long as our commerce is successful, and we have enough for our wives and children, we care for little else. A little ambition, might perhaps induce a few of us to be tithing-men, aldermen, or take command of a company of militia. Well! Monseigneur the Duke, we shall be so, but that is all ; you see we are not very exacting."

"Monsieur Brigard, you speak nobly," said the duke ; "yes, you are honest, I know it, and you would not suffer a mixture in your ranks."

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed several voices, "no dregs with good wine."

"Capital!" said the duke, "this is talking. And now, let us see, Monsieur the Lieutenant de la Prévôte, are there many idlers and vagabonds in the Isle de France?"

Nicholas Poulain, who had hitherto kept in the background was now forced to advance.

"Yes, certainly, monseigneur," he said, "there are many of them."

"Can you give us an estimate of their number?"

"Yes, nearly."

"Estimate them, Maître Poulain."

Poulain began to count on his fingers:

"Thieves; three to four thousand.

"Idlers and beggars; two thousand to two thousand five hundred.

"Occasional thieves; one thousand five hundred to two thousand.

"Assassins: four hundred to five hundred."

"Good! at a low estimate here are six thousand to six thousand five hundred fellows of the sack and cord; to what religion do these rogues belong?"

"What do you mean, monseigneur?" said Poulain.

"I ask if they are Catholics or Huguenots?"

Poulain laughed.

"They are of all religions, monseigneur," he said, "or rather of one alone; gold is their god, and blood their prophet."

"Good! so much for the religious religion, if we may say that. And for the political religion, what shall we say about this? Are they Valois, Leaguers, political zealots, or Navarrais?"

"They are bandits and thieves."

"Monseigneur, do not suppose," said Crucé, "that we shall ever accept these men as allies."

"No, certainly, I do not suppose so, Monsieur Crucé, and that is what disturbs me."

"And why so, monseigneur?" asked some members of the deputation, with surprise.

"Ah! understand, gentlemen, it is because these men, who have no religion, no opinion, and in consequence, do not fraternize with you, as soon as there are no longer magistrates in Paris, as soon as there is no longer royalty, or public force, or anything to restrain them, they will

begin to pillage your shops while you are fighting, and your houses while you occupy the Louvre. Sometimes they will join the Swiss against you, and sometimes they will join you against the Swiss, so that they will be always the strongest."

"The devil!" said the deputies, staring at one another.

"I think this question serious enough to be thought of, gentlemen," said the duke. "As for myself, I shall think about it, and find the means of overcoming this difficulty; your interest before our own has ever been our maxim."

The deputies gave a murmur of approbation.

"And now, gentlemen, permit a man who has travelled twenty-four leagues on horseback in the night and day, to seek his pillow for a few hours. There is no danger at present at least, whereas if you act, there might be. Is not this your opinion?"

"Oh! yes, Monseigneur the Duke," said Brigard.

"Very well."

"We humbly take our leave, monseigneur," continued Brigard; "and what day would you appoint for our next meeting?"

"It shall be as soon as possible, gentlemen; be tranquil," said Mayenne; "to-morrow, perhaps; the day after, at the latest."

And he left them, quite astonished by this foresight, which had discovered a danger of which they had not so much as dreamt.

But scarcely had he disappeared, when a door, concealed in the tapestry, opened, and a woman rushed into the hall.

"The duchess!" exclaimed the deputies.

"Yes, gentlemen," she cried, "and who comes to get you out of your embarrassments?"

The deputies, who knew her resolution, but who, at the same time, feared her enthusiasm, eagerly pressed round her.

"Gentlemen," continued the duchess, smiling, "what

the Hebrews could not accomplish, Judith alone has done. Hope, for I also have my plan."

And presenting to the Leaguers two white hands, which the most gallant kissed, she disappeared through the door which had already given passage to Mayenne.

"*Tudieu!*" exclaimed Bussy Leclerc, stroking his mustaches, and following the duchess, "I think this is the *man* of the family."

"Ouf!" murmured Nicholas Poulain, wiping off the perspiration which stood on his forehead at the sight of Madame de Montpensier, "I wish I were out of all this."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BROTHER BORROMEË.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night, when the deputies returned home in a very contrite frame of mind, and on the street corners nearest their houses left each other, after exchanging civilities.

Nicholas Poulain, who had the longest distance to go, wended his way alone, reflecting on the perplexing situation which had caused him to utter the exclamation which ends the last paragraph of the last chapter.

In fact, the day had been fertile in events for every one, and particularly for himself.

He was returning home, therefore, trembling at what he had heard, and saying to himself, that if the Shade had judged it fit to drive him to a denunciation of the plot of Vincennes, Robert Briquet would never pardon him for not revealing the plan so simply laid bare before M. de Mayenne by Lachapelle Marteau.

He was deep in these reflections, when in the middle of the Rue de la Pierre au Real, a sort of trench about four

feet wide, which led to the Rue Neuve Saint Méry, Nicholas Poulain perceived, running towards him, a Jacobin monk with his robe tucked up to the knee.

He was bound to draw aside, for two Christians could not pass each other in the street except sideways.

Nicholas Poulain hoped that the monk's humility would induce him to yield the pavement to him, a man of the sword. But it was not so; the monk ran like a startled deer: he ran so swiftly that he would have knocked down a wall, and Nicholas Poulain, though cursing, drew aside that he might not be knocked down.

Then in this tunnel lined with houses took place that awkward evolution between two men who both wish to pass and always find themselves in each other's arms.

Poulain swore, the monk cursed; the man of the cowl, less patient than the man of the sword, seized the latter by the middle of his body to place him against the wall.

In this conflict, and as they were on the point of coming to blows, they recognized each other.

"Brother Borromée!" said Poulain.

"Maitre Nicholas Poulain!" exclaimed the monk.

"How are you?" continued Poulain, with that admirable good-nature and unwavering gentleness of the Parisian bourgeois.

"Very ill!" replied the monk, much more difficult to appease than the layman; "you have delayed me, and I was in a great hurry."

"What a devil of a man you are!" replied Poulain; "always as warlike as a Roman! But where the devil are you running at this hour, and in this haste? Is the priory on fire?"

"No; but I have been to the duchess's hotel to speak to Mayneville."

"What duchess?"

"There is but one, I believe, at whose house one could speak with Mayneville," said Borromée, who thought **it best** to reply categorically to the lieutenant de la pré-

vôte; because the lieutenant might have him followed, but who, nevertheless, would not be too communicative with the inquisitive man.

"Well, what had you to do at the house of Madame de Montpensier?" said Nicholas Poulain.

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* it is very simple," said Borromée, seeking for a specious reply; "our reverend prior has been solicited by Madame la Duchesse to become her director; he had accepted, but since then he has had scruples and he now refuses. The interview was settled for to-morrow; I was therefore sent by Dom Modeste Gorenflot, to say to the duchess that she must not count on him."

"Very well; but you do not appear to me to be going towards the Hôtel de Guise, my very dear brother; I shall even say more, you have completely turned your back upon it."

"Very true," replied Brother Borromée, "since I am coming from there."

"But where are you going?"

"They told me at the hotel that Madame la Duchesse had gone to pay a visit to M. de Mayenne, who arrived this evening, and sleeps at the Hôtel Saint Denis."

"Quite true," said Poulain; "the duke is at the Hôtel Saint Denis, and the duchess is with the duke; but, neighbor, what is the use of playing such a game with me? It is not usually the treasurer who is sent to do the commissions of the convent."

"But to a princess, why not?"

"And it is not you, Mayneville's confidant, who believe in the confessions of Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier?"

"And what should I believe in?"

"The devil! my dear fellow, you who know so well the distance from the priory to the middle of the road, since you made me measure it; take care! You tell me so little, I shall perhaps believe a great deal too much."

"And you will be wrong, dear Monsieur Poulain, I know

nothing more. And now do not detain me, I beg, for I shall not find Madame the Duchess."

"You will always find her at her own house, to which she will return, and where you might have waited for her."

"Oh well!" said Borromée, "I shall not be sorry to see Monsieur le Duc for a moment."

"Come, now."

"You know him; if once I let him slip off to his mistress, we shall be unable to lay our hands on him again."

"This is more to the purpose. Now that I know with whom your business is to be transacted, I leave you. Adieu, and good luck."

Borromée, seeing the road clear, in exchange for the wishes addressed to him, threw a *bon soir* to Nicholas Poulain, and hastened on.

"Well, well, there is always something new," said Nicholas Poulain to himself, looking after the Jacobin whose robe gradually disappeared in the shadows, "but why the devil do I want to know what is going on? Am I beginning to like the trade I am condemned to follow? For shame!"

And he retired to bed, not with the calm of a good conscience, but with the sense of peace given to us, in every position of this world, however false it may be, by the support of one stronger than ourselves.

During this time, Borromée continued his way with an increased velocity which gave him hopes of recovering the time he had lost.

He knew, indeed, the habits of M. de Mayenne, and no doubt in order to be so well informed, had reasons which he did not think it necessary to explain to Maître Nicholas Poulain.

However, he reached the Hôtel Saint Denis quite out of breath, just as the duke and duchess had finished discussing their important affairs. M. de Mayenne was about to take leave of his sister, that he might be free to pay a

visit to that lady in the city, who, as we know, had given Joyeuse such good cause to complain.

The brother and sister, after many commentaries upon the king's reception and the plan of the ten, had agreed on the following facts :

The king had no suspicions, and became daily more easy to attack.

The most important point was to organize the League in the provinces of the north, while the king abandoned his brother, and forgot Henry of Navarre.

Of these two last enemies, the Duke of Anjou, with his brooding ambition, was the only one to fear ; as to Henry of Navarre, they knew, through well-informed spies, that he only busied himself making love to his three or four mistresses.

"Paris was prepared," said Mayenne aloud ; "but their alliance with the royal family gave strength to the politicians and sound royalists. We must wait for a breach between the king and his allies ; this breach, with Henry's changeable temper, could not long delay taking place. But nothing is pressing," continued De Mayenne, "let us wait."

"I," said the duchess, in a low tone, "needed ten men, spread through the different quarters of Paris, to stir up the city, after the blow I meditate. I have found these ten men, I ask for nothing more."

They had reached this point, the one in his dialogue, the other in her *aparte*, when Mayneville entered suddenly, announcing that Borromée wished to speak to the duke.

"Borromée !" said the duke, surprised, "who is he?"

"Monseigneur, it is the man whom you sent me from Nancy, when I asked your highness for a man of action and a man of intelligence."

"I remember, I told you I had the two in one, and sent you Captain Borroville. Has he changed his name to Borromée?"

"Yes, monseigneur, his name and his uniform. He calls himself Borromee, and is a Jacobin."

"Borroville a Jacobin?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And why is he a Jacobin? The devil must laugh if he has recognized him under the frock."

"Why is he a Jacobin?" (the duchess made a sign to Mayneville). "You shall know another time," she continued; "it is our secret, monseigneur; in the meantime let us hear Captain Borroville, or Brother Borromée, as you like."

"Yes, the more so as his visit makes me somewhat uneasy."

"And me also, I confess," said Mayneville.

"Then introduce him at once," said the duchess. As to the duke, he wavered between the desire to hear the messenger and the fear of missing the appointment with his mistress.

He looked at the door, and then at the clock. The door opened as the clock struck eleven.

"Eh! Borroville," said the duke, who could not help laughing, despite his ill-humor; "how you are disguised, my friend!"

"Monseigneur," said the captain, "I am really very ill at ease under this devil of a robe, but what must be, must be, as M. de Guise, père, used to say."

"It is not I, however, who have stuffed you into that robe, Borroville," said the duke; "do not be angry with me, I beg."

"No, Monseigneur, it is Madame la Duchesse; but I do not complain, as it is worn in the service of her Highness."

"Many thanks, captain; and now let us hear what you have to say to us at so late an hour."

"Unfortunately I was unable to come to you any sooner, Monseigneur, for I have the whole priory on my shoulders."

"Well! now speak."

"Monsieur the Duke," said Borroville, "the king sends assistance to M. the Duke d'Anjou."

"Bah!" said Mayenne, "we know that song; they have sung it for the last three years."

"Oh! yes, but this time, monseigneur, the news is certain."

"Hum!" said Mayenne, with a motion of his head like that of a horse that rears, "certain?"

"This very day, that is, at two o'clock this morning, M. de Joyeuse started for Rouen. He takes the sea at Dieppe, and conveys to Antwerp three thousand men."

"Oh! oh!" said the duke, "and who told you this, Borroville?"

"I heard it from a man who is going to Navarre, monseigneur."

"To Henry of Navarre?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And on whose part does he visit Henry?"

"On the part of the king. Yes, monseigneur, on the part of the king, and with a letter from the king."

"Who is this man?"

"He calls himself Robert Briquet."

"Well?"

"He is a great friend of Dom Gorenflot."

"A great friend of Dom Gorenflot?"

"They thou and thee each other."

"Ambassador from the king?"

"Yes, I am sure of it; from the priory he sent to the Louvre for a letter of credit, and it was one of our monks who executed the commission."

"And this monk?"

"Is our little warrior, Jacques Clement, the same one you noticed, Madame la Duchesse."

"And he did not show you the letter, the blockhead!" said Mayenne.

"Monseigneur, the king did not deliver it to him; he sent it to the messenger by his own men."

"We must have this letter, *mordieu!*"

"Certainly," said the duchess.

"How did you not think of this?" said Mayneville.

"I thought of it so much, that I wished to send one of my own men, who is a perfect Hercules, with the messenger, but Robert Briquet suspected him, and dismissed him."

"You must go yourself."

"Impossible."

"Why so?"

"He knows me."

"As a monk, but not as a captain, I hope?"

"Upon my soul, I don't know; this Robert Briquet has a very piercing eye."

"What sort of a man is he?" said Mayenne.

"A tall, dry fellow, all nerve, all muscle, and all bone-shrewd, mocking, and taciturn."

"Ah! ah! and clever with his sword?"

"Like him who invented it, monseigneur."

"A long face?"

"Monseigneur, he has all faces."

"A friend of the prior?"

"From the time he was a simple friar."

"Oh! I have a suspicion," said Mayenne, knitting his brow, "and I will clear it up."

"Act quickly, monseigneur; for shaped as he is, the fellow goes quickly."

"Borroville," said Mayenne, "you must go to Soissons, where you will find my brother."

"But the priory, monseigneur?"

"You need not be embarrassed," said Mayneville; "invent some story for Dom Modeste, and he will believe everything you tell him."

"You will tell M. de Guise," continued Mayenne, "all that you know about the mission of M. de Joyeuse."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And Navarre, that you forget, Mayenne?" said the duchess.

"I forget it so little that I take charge of it myself," replied Mayenne. "Let them saddle me a fresh horse, Mayneville.

"Can he be still alive?" he added in a low tone. "Oh, yes; it must be he."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHICOT, A LATIN SCHOLAR.

AFTER the departure of the two young men, we may remember that Chicot walked on at a rapid pace; but as soon as they disappeared in the valley, which is crossed by the bridge of Juvisy sur l'Orge, Chicot, who seemed, like Argus, to have the privilege of seeing behind him, no longer observing Ernauton and Sainte Maline—Chicot stopped at the culminating point of the valley, scanned the horizon, the ditches, the plain, the bushes, the river—all, in fact, to the dappled clouds which glided obliquely behind the large elms on the roadside. Then certain of having observed no one who watched or inconvenienced him, he seated himself on the other side of a ditch, his back resting against a tree, and began what he called an examination of his conscience.

He had now two purses of money, for he had perceived that the packet delivered to him by Sainte Maline, besides the royal letter, contained certain round objects which much resembled gold or silver money.

The envelope was a right royal purse, embroidered with two H's the one above, the other beneath.

"It is pretty," said Chicot, examining the purse, "it is charming on the part of the king! His name! his arms! He could not be more generous or more stupid. Decidedly I shall never make anything of him! Upon my word," continued Chicot, "if one thing astonishes me, it

is that this good and excellent king did not have embroidered on the same purse, the letter he sends by me to his brother-in-law, and my receipt, Why trouble ourselves? all the political world is out to-day; let us talk politics, like the rest of them. Bah! should they do a little in the way of assassination with this poor Chicot, as they did with the courier which this same Henry sent to M. de Joyeuse in Rome, it would be one enemy less, that's all; and friends are so numerous in these days, that we may be prodigal of them. Providence makes a bad choice when he chooses! Now let us first see how much money he has sent; we will examine the letter afterwards. One hundred crowns, just the very sum I borrowed from Gorenflot. Upon my word, it is royal! Ah! pardon, let us not calumniate; here is a little packet—Spanish gold—five quadruples; come, come, this is delicate! It is very nice, Henriquet! really, were it not for the initials and fleur-de-lis, which appear to me a little superfluous, I would send him a hearty kiss. Now this purse annoys me; it seems to me that the birds, as they fly over my head, will take me for a royal emissary, and laugh at me, or what will be much worse, denounce me to the passers-by.”

Chicot emptied his purse into the hollow of his hand, drew from his pocket Gorenflot's plain linen bag, placed the gold and silver in it, saying to the crowns, “You can rest quietly together, my children, for you come from the same country.”

Then, drawing in turn the letter from the purse, he placed in its stead a stone which he picked up, tied the strings of the purse round the stone, and hurled it into the Orge, which wound its way beneath the bridge.

The water spouted; two or three circles broke the calm surface, and gradually spread to the shore.

“So much for myself,” said Chicot; “now let us work for Henry.”

And he took up the letter, which he had placed on the

ground, to be better able to throw the purse into the river.

But there came along the road a donkey loaded with wood.

Two women accompanied the donkey, which marched as proudly as if, instead of wood, he carried relics.

Chicot hid the letter under his large hand, placed on the ground, and allowed them to pass.

Once more alone, he picked up the letter, tore the envelope, broke the seal with the utmost tranquillity, and as though it was a simple letter from a lawyer.

He then rolled the envelope between his two hands, smashed the seal between two stones, and sent the whole after the purse in the river.

"Now," said Chicot, "let us see the style."

And he unfolded the letter and read:

"‘OUR VERY DEAR BROTHER,—That profound love which our very dear brother and deceased king, Charles the Ninth, felt for you, still abides under the arches of the Louvre, and firmly holds my heart.’"

Chicot bowed.

"‘Therefore it grieves me to have to trouble you with sad and vexatious matters, but you are strong against ill-fortune, so that I no longer hesitate to communicate to you things which are only told to tried and valiant friends.’"

Chicot interrupted the perusal and bowed again.

"‘Besides,’" he continued, "‘I have a royal interest in warning you, and this interest is the honor of my name, and of your own, my brother.

"‘On this point we resemble each other, as we are both surrounded with enemies. Chicot will explain it to you.’"

"Chicotus explicabit!" said Chicot; "or rather *evolvet*, which is infinitely more elegant."

"‘Your servant, Monsieur le Vicomte de Turenne, causes daily scandal at your court. God forbid I should

interfere in your affairs except for your honor and benefit, but your wife, whom, to my great regret, I call my sister, ought to have this care of you in my place and stead, which she has not done.’”

“Oh! oh!” said Chicot, continuing his Latin translations; “*Quaque omittent facere. This is severe.*”

“‘I advise you, then, my brother, to guard against the relations of Marguerite with the Vicomte de Turenne, strangely allied with our common friends, bringing disgrace and injury to the house of Bourbon. Act with vigor as soon as you shall be sure of the fact, into which I beg you to inquire as soon as you have heard Chicot explain my letter.’”

“*Statim atque audiveris Chicotum litteras explicantem. Let us proceed,*” said Chicot.

“‘It would be a grievous calamity for the least suspicion to rest upon the legitimacy of your succession, my brother—a precious point, of which God has forbidden me to think; for, alas! I myself am condemned in advance not to live again in my posterity.

“‘The two accomplices whom, as brother and as king, I denounce to you, meet most of the time in a small château which they call Loignac; their pretext being generally the chase. This château is besides a hot-bed of intrigues, to which the MM. de Guise are no strangers, for you know, without any doubt, my dear Henry, the strange love with which my sister pursued Henry of Guise, and my own brother M. d’Anjou, at the time I bore this title myself, and he was called the Duke of Alençon.’”

“*Quo et quam irregulari amore sit prosecuta et Henricum Guiseum et germanum meum,*” etc., etc.

“‘I embrace you, and recommend my advice, being ever ready to aid you in all, and for all. In the meantime, aid yourself by the advice of Chicot, whom I send to you.’”

“Age, auctore Chicoto. Good! behold me counsellor of the King of Navarre.”

“‘Your affectionate, etc.’”

Having thus read, Chicot placed his head between his hands.

"Oh!" he said, "this looks to me like a very bad commission, and proves to me that in flying from one evil, as says Horatius Flaccus, we fall into a worse one.

"Really, I prefer Mayenne.

"And yet, apart from his devil of an embroidered satchel, which I cannot forgive him, the letter is that of a clever man. In fact, supposing Henriot kneaded of the dough of which husbands are usually made, this letter will embroil him at the same time with his wife, Turenne, Anjou, Guise, and even with Spain. In fact, if Henry of Valois is so well informed at the Louvre of what takes place with Henry of Navarre at Pau, he must have some spy there, and this spy will greatly puzzle Henriot.

"On the other hand, this letter will necessarily lead me into mischief if I encounter a Spaniard, a Lorraine, a Béarnais, or a Fleming, curious enough to wish to know why they have sent me to Béarn.

"But I should have very little foresight, if I did not remember that there is a chance of that.

"Monsieur Borromée, especially, will play me some trick or I am much mistaken.

"The second point.

"Did Chicot seek anything, when he asked King Henry for a mission? Tranquillity was his object.

"But Chicot is going to embroil the King of Navarre with his wife.

"However, this is not the business of Chicot, except that Chicot, by embroiling among themselves such high personages, will make mortal enemies, who will prevent his reaching the happy age of eighty.

"Well! so much the better, life is nothing when youth is spent.

"But then, I might as well have waited for M. de Mayenne's knife.

"No, there must be reciprocity in all things.

"Chicot will pursue his journey.

"But Chicot is a man of sense, and Chicot will take his precautions. In consequence, he will only have money about him, so that if they kill Chicot, they injure none but him.

"Chicot will put the finishing touch to what he has begun, that is, he will translate from beginning to end this handsome letter into Latin, and engrave it on the tablets of his memory, where it is already two-thirds engraved; he will then purchase a horse, because really, from Juvisy to Pau, he should have to put the right leg before the left too often.

"But above all things, Chicot will tear into pieces the letter of his friend Henry de Valois, and he will take special care that these little morsels, reduced to the state of atoms, should go, some into the Orge, others into the air, the remainder to be entrusted to the earth, our common mother, to whose bosom everything returns, even the follies of kings.

"When Chicot shall have finished what he has begun——"

And Chicot interrupted himself to execute his project of division. A third of the letter went by water, another third by air, and the remaining third disappeared in a hole dug for this purpose with an instrument which was neither a dagger nor a knife, but which might replace both if the occasion demanded, and which Chicot wore at his belt.

When he had finished this operation, he continued: "Chicot will set out with the minutest precautions, and will dine in the good city of Corbeil, like an honest stomach that he is.

"In the meantime," continued Chicot, "let us occupy ourselves with the Latin theme which we have decided upon committing to memory; I think we shall compose a very choice morsel."

Suddenly Chicot stopped. He discovered that he could not translate into Latin the word Louvre; this greatly perplexed him.

He was equally compelled to latinize the word Margot into Margota, as he had already changed Chicot into Chicotus, because, to speak rightly, he must have translated Chicot into Chicôt and Margot into Margôt, which was not Latin but Greek.

As to Margarita, he never thought of it; the translation, in his opinion, would not have been exact.

All this Latin, with the search after purity, and the Ciceronian turn, conducted Chicot to Corbeil, an agreeable town, where the bold messenger gave but little attention to the marvels of Saint Spire, and a great deal to an innkeeper, who perfumed, with his appetizing vapors, the neighborhood of the cathedral.

We shall not describe the feast he made; we shall not attempt to speak of the horse he bought from the stables of the host. It would impose upon us too rigorous a task; we will only say, that the repast was long, and the horse bad enough to furnish us, if our conscience were less noble, with matter for nearly a volume.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FOUR WINDS.

Chicot, with his little horse, which must have been a very good one to carry so great a personage—Chicot, after having slept at Fontainebleau, on the next morning made a *detour* to the right, and proceeded to a small village named Orgeval. He would willingly this day have gone a few leagues further, for he appeared desirous of getting away from Paris, but his horse stumbled so

frequently and so low that he judged it necessary to halt.

Besides, his eyes, usually so exercised, had not succeeded in distinguishing anything that aroused suspicion.

Men, carts, and fences had appeared to him perfectly inoffensive.

But Chicot, in safety, or at least apparently so, did not on that account live in security; no one, indeed, as our readers know, trusted less and believed less in appearances than Chicot.

Before retiring, and after seeing to his horse, he examined the whole house with much attention.

They showed Chicot handsome chambers with three or four doors; but in the opinion of Chicot these rooms not only had too many doors, but these doors were not sufficiently secured.

The host had just finished repairing a large closet with but one door on the staircase; this door was provided with formidable bolts on the inside.

Chicot had a bed prepared in this closet, which at first sight he preferred to the magnificent rooms without fortifications which had been shown to him.

He tried the bolts in their staples, and, satisfied that their play was both firm and easy, he supped in his chamber, forbade them to take away the table, under pretence that he sometimes took a bite during the night, supped, undressed, placed his clothes on a chair, and slipped into bed.

But previous to retiring, for the sake of greater precaution, he drew from his pocket the purse or rather the bag of crowns, and placed them under the bolster, along with his good sword.

He then went three times over the letter, in his mind.

The table served him as a second barricade, and yet this double rampart did not appear sufficient to him; he rose, took a wardrobe in his two long arms, and placed it in front of the door, which it hermetically closed.

Between him and any possible aggression, he had a door, a table, and a wardrobe.

The hostelry had appeared to Chicot almost uninhabited; the host had an honest countenance. On this night it blew a hurricane, and among the neighboring trees was heard the frightful crackling, which, if we believe Lucretius, becomes so sweet and hospitable a sound for a traveller, well-clothed, and covered, and lying in a good bed.

Chicot, after all his preparations for defence, plunged deliciously into his bed. We must say, the bed was soft, and so arranged as to insure a man against all uneasiness arising from either men or things.

In fact, he sheltered himself under curtains of green serge, and a counterpane, thick with eider-down, warmed with a mild heat the limbs of the sleeping traveller.

Chicot had supped as Hippocrates recommends us to do, that is, modestly; he had only drunk one bottle of wine; his stomach, pleasantly dilated, communicated to the whole organism that sensation of comfort which is unfailingly imparted by that complaisant organ which replaces the heart with many who are called honest men.

Chicot had a lamp, which he had placed on the edge of the table, close to his bed; he read before going to sleep, and a little to induce sleep, a very curious new book which had just appeared, and which was the work of a certain Mayor of Bordeaux whom they called Montagne or Montaigne.

This work had been printed in Bordeaux in 1581; it contained the first two parts of a work, since become well-known, and entitled the *Essays*. This book was interesting enough for a man to read and re-read during the day; but it had, at the same time, the advantage of being quite tedious enough not to hinder from sleeping a man who had ridden fifteen leagues on horseback, and taken his bottle of generous wine at supper.

Chicot had a great liking for this work, which, on

leaving Paris, he had placed in his pocket, and with the author of which he was personally acquainted. Cardinal du Perron had called it the breviary of honest men, and Chicot, capable in every point of appreciating the taste and wit of the cardinal,—Chicot, we say, willingly took the *Essays* of the Mayor of Bordeaux for a breviary.

It happened, however, that in reading the eighth chapter he fell into a profound sleep.

The lamp was still burning; the door, fortified by the wardrobe and the table, was still closed, the sword was still at the head of the bed with the crowns. Saint Michael the Archangel would have slept like Chicot, without dreaming of Satan, even if he had known the lion to be roaring on the other side of this door, and on the wrong side of the bolts.

We have observed that the wind blew loud: the hissing of this gigantic serpent slipped with frightful melody under the door, and lifted the planks in an awful manner. The wind is the most perfect imitation, or rather the most complete travesty of the human voice; at one time it squalls like a crying child, at another it imitates, in its groans, the heavy anger of a husband quarrelling with his wife.

Chicot was an amateur of tempests; at the end of an hour, all this turmoil became an element of tranquillity to him; he fought against the inclemency of the season:

Against the cold, with his counterpane.

Against the wind, with his snoring.

And yet, as he slept, it seemed to Chicot that the tempest increased, and especially, that it came nearer and nearer. All of a sudden, a gust of wind, of irresistible force, shook the door, burst the planks and bolts, pushed the wardrobe, which lost its balance, and fell on the lamp, which it extinguished, and on the table, which it smashed.

Chicot had the faculty, while sleeping comfortably, of quickly awaking, and with all his senses about him.

This presence of mind indicated to him that it would be better for him to slip out of bed into the recess behind than to get out in front. As he glided into the recess his left hand seized the bag of crowns and his right hand grasped the hilt of his sword.

Chicot opened his eyes.

The darkness was profound.

Chicot then opened his ears, and it seemed to him that everything in the room was literally going to pieces in the battle of the four winds which disputed the whole chamber: from the wardrobe, which still continued crushing the table, to the chairs, which rolled and clashed against each other, all the while falling foul of the other furniture.

In the midst of all this noise, it seemed to Chicot as if the four winds had entered his room in real flesh and bone, and that he had to deal with Eurus, Notus, Aquilo, and Boreas, in person, with their puffed cheeks and their heavy feet.

He was resigned, because he understood that he could do nothing against the Olympian gods. Chicot crouched in a corner of the recess like the son of Oileus, after one of his great furies related by Homer.

But he held the point of his long sword straight out before him towards the wind, or rather the winds, so that in case the mythological individuals inconsiderately approached him, he could spit the whole of them, should the result even equal that which resulted from the wound inflicted by Diomed on Venus.

After a few minutes, however, of the most abominable uproar that had ever defiled a human ear, Chicot profited by a momentary cessation of the hurricane to drown with his voice the unchained elements, and the furniture engaged in a colloquy much too noisy to be natural.

Chicot cried and vociferated: "Help!"

At length Chicot made such a noise that it seemed to quiet the elements as if Neptune in person had pronounced

the famous *quos ego*, and in the course of six or eight minutes, during which Messieurs Eurus, Notus, Boreas, and Aquilo, seemed to beat a retreat, the landlord appeared with a lantern and enlightened the scene, which presented a deplorable aspect, and resembled a battle-field. The large wardrobe overturned on the broken table, unmasked the door without hinges, which was held simply by one of its bolts, and oscillated like the sail of a ship. The three or four chairs which completed the furniture had their backs on the floor and their legs in the air: lastly, the crockery which had been on the table lay smashed and broken on the flagstones.

"Why, this is hell, surely!" exclaimed Chicot, recognizing his host in the light of his lantern.

"Oh! monsieur," cried the host, observing the frightful havoc, "oh! monsieur, what is the matter?"

And he raised his hands, and consequently his lantern, towards heaven.

"Tell me, my friend," roared Chicot, "how many demons have you in your house?"

"Oh! Jesus! what weather!" replied the host, with the same pathetic gesture.

"Why, the bolts do not hold!" continued Chicot; "the house is made of pasteboard; I would much rather leave this; I prefer the road."

And Chicot came from behind his bed and appeared, sword in hand, in the space left free between the foot of his bed and the wall.

"Oh! my poor furniture," sighed the host.

"And my clothes!" cried Chicot, "where are they? my clothes, they were on that chair!"

"Your clothes, my dear monsieur," said the host, with simplicity, "why, if they were there, they ought to be there still."

"How! if they were there; but do you suppose," said Chicot, "that I came here in the costume in which you now behold me?"

And Chicot attempted, but in vain, to cover himself with his short tunic.

"*Mon Dieu !* monsieur," replied the host, somewhat embarrassed how to reply to such an argument, "I know you were dressed."

"It is fortunate you admit that."

"But——"

"But what?"

"The wind has opened everything, dispersed everything."

"Ah! that is a reason."

"You see," said the host, quickly.

"Follow my calculations, however, dear friend," said Chicot; "when the wind enters anywhere—and it must have entered here, eh, to cause the disorder I see?"

"Without the least doubt."

"Well, when the wind enters anywhere, it comes from without?"

"Yes, certainly, monsieur."

"You do not deny it?"

"No, it would be madness."

"Well! the wind, then, on entering here, ought to bring the clothes of others into my room, instead of carrying mine I know not where."

"Ah! well, yes, so it seems to me. However, the contrary exists, or appears to exist."

"Neighbor," said Chicot, who had explored the floor with his investigating glance; "neighbor, what road did the wind take to reach me here?"

"What do you mean?"

"I ask you whence came the wind?"

"From the north, monsieur, from the north."

"Well! it must have walked in the mud, for here are the footmarks on the floor."

And Chicot pointed out, on the stones, the recent traces left by a muddy boot.

The host turned pale.

"Now, my friend," said Chicot, "if I have any advice to give you, it is, to look after these winds that enter the hotels, penetrate into the rooms by bursting the doors, and retire carrying off the clothes of the guests."

The host drew back a couple of steps, to get beyond the encumbering furniture, and to reach the entrance to the corridor.

When he now found his retreat secured :

"Why, do you call me a thief?" he said.

"Say, what have you done with your good-natured countenance?" demanded Chicot; "I find you completely changed."

"I change because you insult me."

"I?"

"No doubt, you call me a thief," replied the host, in a still louder tone, much resembling a threat.

"Why, I call you a thief, because you are responsible for my clothes, I think, and because my clothes have been stolen; you will not deny it?"

And it was now Chicot, who, in turn, like a fencing master touching his adversary, made a threatening gesture.

"Holloa!" cried the host; "holloa! come to me, help!"

At this appeal, four men, armed with sticks, appeared on the staircase.

"Ah! here are Eurus, Notus, Boreas, and Aquilo," said Chicot; "*ventre de biche!* since the opportunity presents itself, I will deprive the earth of the north wind; it is a service to humanity; there will be eternal spring."

And he made such a thrust with his long sword in the direction of the nearest assailant, that if the latter, with the agility of a veritable son of Æolus, had not made a bound backwards, he would have been pierced through and through.

Unfortunately as in making the backward leap he was facing Chicot, and consequently could not look behind, he fell on the edge of the uppermost step of the staircase, and,

not being able to keep his balance, he rolled from the top to the bottom.

This retreat was a signal for the three others, who disappeared through the opening before them, or rather behind them, with the rapidity of phantoms sinking through a trap-door.

The last, however, who disappeared, had time, while his companions made their descent, to whisper a few words in the ear of the host.

"Well, well!" grumbled the latter, "your clothes will be found."

"Ah! well, that is all I ask."

"And they shall be brought to you."

"Very good. I don't want to go naked; that is reasonable, it seems to me."

His clothes were brought, but visibly deteriorated.

"Oh! oh!" said Chicot, "there are plenty of nails in your staircase. What a devil of a wind it was. But no matter, it is an honorable restitution; how could I suspect you? you have such an honest face."

The host smiled serenely.

"And now you will go to sleep again, I presume?"

"No, thank you, I have slept enough."

"What will you do, then?"

"You will lend me your lantern, if you please, and I shall continue my reading," replied Chicot, with the same agreeable manner.

The host said nothing; he simply handed the lantern and retired.

Chicot replaced his cupboard against the door, and returned to his bed.

The night was calm; the wind had lulled, as if Chicot's sword had penetrated the bottle that contained it.

At daybreak, the ambassador demanded his horse, paid his bill and went away, saying:

"We shall see, to-night."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW CHICOT CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY, AND WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM.

CHICOT passed the whole morning in congratulating himself on the coolness and patience he had displayed during this night of trials.

"But," he thought, "they never catch an old fox twice in the same trap; it is, therefore, almost certain that they will invent some new deviltry to practise on me to-day, so I must be on my guard."

The result of this prudent reasoning was, that Chicot made a march that day, which Xenophon would not have thought unworthy of immortalizing in his retreat of the Ten Thousand.

Every tree, every hillock, every wall, served him for points of observation or natural fortification.

He even concluded, as he wended his way, alliances, if not offensive, at least defensive.

In fact, four grocers from Paris, who were going to Orleans to order their preserves from Cotignac, and to Limoges for dried fruits, condescended to enjoy the society of Chicot, who presented himself as a hosier from Bordeaux, returning home after arranging his affairs. As Chicot, originally a Gascon, had not lost his accent, except when the absence of this accent was particularly necessary to him, he inspired his travelling companions with no distrust.

This army was composed, then, of five masters and four grocers' clerks. It was no more to be despised for its

spirit than its number, such warlike habits had the League introduced among the Parisian shop-keepers.

We will not affirm that Chicot professed a great respect for the bravery of his companions ; but certainly in this case the proverb is true, which says that three cowards together have less fear than one brave man alone.

Chicot had no fear at all, the moment he found himself with four cowards. He disdained even to turn round, as he had previously done, to observe those who might follow him.

It resulted from this that while talking politics and boasting a great deal they reached without incidents the town where they intended to sup and spend the night.

They supped, drank hard, and each retired to his room.

Chicot had not been sparing during the repast, either of his fun, which amused his companions, or of the cups of Muscatelle and Burgundy, which kept his sallies flying. They had made light, among the merchants, of his majesty the King of France and of all the other majesties, whether of Lorraine, of Navarre, of Flanders, or other places.

Chicot went to bed, after having arranged to travel again on the morrow, with his four companions, who had, so to speak, triumphantly conducted him to his room.

Maitre Chicot found himself guarded like a prince in his corridor, by the four travellers, whose four cells preceded his own, situated at the end of a passage, and consequently impregnable, owing to the intermediate alliances.

Indeed, at this period the roads not being over safe, even for those who were only bent upon their own affairs, each traveller secured the aid of his neighbor in case of accident. Chicot, who had not related his misfortunes of the preceding night, had strongly urged this article of the treaty, which had, moreover, been unanimously adopted.

Chicot might, therefore, without failing in his accustomed prudence, go to bed, and go to sleep. He might the more safely do so, as he had for greater safety,

minutely visited his chamber, driven the bolts of his door, and closed the shutter of his window, the only one in the apartment. It is unnecessary to add he had sounded the wall with his fist, and that in every part the wall had returned a satisfactory sound.

But during his first sleep, an event occurred that the Sphinx himself, that diviner *par excellence*, would never have foreseen; but the devil was inclined to mix himself up in Chicot's affairs, and this devil is more cunning than all the Sphinxes in the world.

Towards half-past nine, a blow was gently struck on the door of the grocers' clerks, who were all four lodged together in a sort of garret over the corridor of the merchants, their masters. One of them opened, in very bad humor, and found himself face to face with the host.

"Gentlemen," said the latter to them, "I see with great pleasure that you are sleeping completely dressed, for I wish to render you a great service. Your masters grew very warm over politics at the supper-table. It seems that an alderman of the town heard them, and reported their sentiments to the mayor. Now our town boasts of being very loyal. The mayor sent the watch, and they have arrested your masters and conducted them to the Hôtel de Ville, to give an explanation. The prison is very near the Hôtel de Ville. Now, my boys, bestir yourselves, your mules are ready for you, and your masters will join you all right."

The four clerks bounded like deer, bolted down the stairs, jumped on their mules, and took the road to Paris, telling the host to inform their masters of their departure, and of the direction taken, if the latter should happen to return to the inn.

Having seen the four youths disappear round the corner of the street, the host knocked with the same precaution at the first door of the corridor.

He knocked so well that the first merchant cried out in a stentorian voice :

"Who is there?"

"Silence! man," replied the host; "come to the door, and walk on your toes."

The merchant obeyed; but as he was a prudent man, though he placed his ear to the door, he did not open it, but demanded:

"Who are you?"

"Do you recognize the voice of your landlord?"

"Yes, *mon Dieu!* what is the matter?"

"It seems that while you were at table you spoke a little too freely of the king, and the mayor has been informed by some spy, so that the watch has arrived. Luckily I thought of showing them your clerk's room, so they are upstairs arresting your clerks instead of you."

"Oh! oh! what are you telling me?" said the merchant.

"The pure and simple truth. Make haste and save yourself while the staircase is still free."

"But my companions?"

"Oh! you have not time to give them warning."

"Poor fellows!"

The merchant dressed himself in all haste.

During this time, the host, as if struck by a sudden inspiration, tapped with his finger on the partition which separated the first merchant from the second.

The latter, awakened by the same words and the same story, gently opened his door; the third, awakened like the second, called the fourth; and the whole four, as swift as a flight of swallows, disappeared, walking on the tips of their toes, and with their hands raised to Heaven.

"That poor hosier," said they, "it will all fall on him; but it is true he said the most. Well! woe betide him, for the host has not the time to warn him like us."

In fact Maître Chicot, for obvious reasons, had received no warning.

While the merchants were taking flight, recommending him to God, he was buried in the most profound sleep.

The host assured himself of this by listening at his door ; he now descended into the lower hall, the door of which, carefully secured, opened at his signal.

He drew off his cap, and entered.

The room was occupied by six armed men, one of whom seemed to command the others.

"Well?" said the latter.

"Well! I have obeyed in every point, monsieur."

"Your inn is deserted?"

"Absolutely."

"The person we have indicated has been neither awakened nor warned."

"Neither warned nor awakened!"

"You know in whose name we act; you know whose cause we serve, for you are yourself a defender of this cause."

"Yes, certainly, monsieur; and therefore you see that I have sacrificed, to keep the oath, the money which my guests would have spent at my house, for it is said in the oath, 'I will sacrifice my property to the defence of the holy Catholic religion.'"

"'And my life!' you forget that word?" said the officer, in a haughty tone.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the host, clasping his hands.

"Do they want my life? I have a wife and children!"

"Your life will be demanded only, if you do not blindly obey what is ordered you."

"Oh! I will obey; be assured."

"In that case, go to bed, close the doors, and whatever you may see or hear, do not move, were your house on fire, and blazing over your head. You see that your part is not very difficult."

"Alas! alas! I shall be ruined," said the host.

"I am instructed to indemnify you," said the officer; "take these thirty crowns."

"My house worth thirty crowns!" said the innkeeper, piteously.

"Eh! *vive Dieu!* they won't break a single window! you weeping fool. Fie! what poor champions of the holy League we have here!"

The host left, and shut himself in like an emissary apprised of the sacking of the city.

The officer then ordered two men, the best armed, to place themselves under Chicot's window, while he, with the three others, mounted to the lodging of the poor hosier, as he was called by his companions, who were already far from the town.

"You know the order?" said the officer. "If he opens, if he allows himself to be searched, if we find about him what we seek, he must not receive the slightest injury; but if the contrary happens, a good blow with the dagger—with the dagger, do you understand? no pistol, no musket. Besides, it is needless, since we are four to one."

They had reached the door.

The officer knocked.

"Who is there?" said Chicot, suddenly awaking.

"*Pardieu!*" said the officer, "let us be shrewd."

"Your friends the grocers, who have something important to communicate."

"Oh, oh!" said Chicot, "last night's wine has thickened your voices, my grocers."

The officer softened his voice, and said in the most insinuating tone:

"But open, dear companion and neighbor."

"*Ventre de biche!* how your grocery smells of steel!" said Chicot.

"Ah! you will not open?" cried the officer, getting impatient, "well, then, come; break in the door."

Chicot ran to the window, opened it, and saw below two naked swords shining.

"I am caught," he exclaimed.

"Ah! ah! neighbor," said the officer, who had heard the noise of the window being opened, "you fear the dangerous jump; you are right. Come, open to us, open."

"Faith! no," said Chicot; "the door is solid, and I shall get help when you make a noise."

The officer burst into a laugh, and ordered the soldiers to unscrew the hinges.

Chicot began to call the merchants.

"Fool!" said the officer, "do you fancy we have left you any help? undeceive yourself, you are quite alone, so make up your mind to it. Go on, soldiers."

And Chicot heard three muskets strike against the door, with the force and regularity of three battering-rams.

"There are here three muskets and an officer: below only two swords and fifteen feet to jump, a mere trifle. I prefer the swords to the muskets."

And tying his bag to his belt, he mounted, without hesitating, on the window-sill, holding his drawn sword in his hand.

The two men below held their blades in the air.

But Chicot had guessed right. No man, were he a Goliath, would await the fall of a pigmy, when this other might kill him in his fall.

The soldiers changed their tactics, and drawing back, decided to attack Chicot when he reached the ground.

It was just what the Gascon expected. He dropped on his toes like an expert clown, and remained crouched; at the same moment, one of the men dealt him a blow that would have cut through a wall.

But Chicot did not even give himself the trouble of parrying it. He received the blow full in the chest, but thanks to Gorenflot's coat of mail, the blade broke like glass.

"He has armor!" said the soldier.

"*Pardieu!*" replied Chicot, who, by a back-handed stroke, had already cut through his skull.

The other began to cry out, thinking now only of defending himself.

Unfortunately, he had not the strength of Jacques

Clement. At the second pass, Chicot laid him by the side of his comrade, so when the door burst in, the officer, on looking out of the window, saw nothing but his two sentinels bathed in their blood.

At fifty paces from the victims, Chicot was quietly making his escape.

"He is a demon," cried the officer; "he is proof against steel!"

"Yes, but not against lead," said a soldier, preparing to fire.

"Fool!" exclaimed the officer, striking down the musket. "No noise! why, you will awaken the whole town; we shall catch him to-morrow."

"Ah! there it is," said one of the soldiers, philosophically; "we must place four men below, and only two above."

"You are a fool!" replied the officer.

"We shall see what Monsieur le Duc will say of him," grumbled the soldier, to console himself.

And he rested the butt of his musket on the ground.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THIRD DAY OF THE JOURNEY.

Chicot retreated with that tranquillity only because he was at Etampes, that is, in a town, in the midst of a population, under the safeguard of a certain number of magistrates, who, on his first complaint would have given free course to justice, and would have arrested M. de Guise himself.

His assailants were perfectly aware of their false position. The officer, as we have seen, withheld his men from firing at the risk of allowing Chicot to escape.

It was for the same reason that he abstained from pursuing Chicot, who at the first attempt made to follow him, would have uttered cries to awaken the whole town.

The little troop, reduced by one-third, disappeared in the darkness, and, to be less compromised, abandoned the two bodies, leaving their swords near them, that it might be supposed they had killed each other.

Chicot vainly searched the neighborhood, for the merchants and their clerks.

As he supposed that those with whom he had been dealing, would not think of remaining in the town after the failure of their attempt, he decided that it would be the best plan to remain there himself.

He did more ; after making a *détour*, and, from the corner of the neighboring street, hearing the retreating steps of the horses, he had the audacity to return to the inn.

There he found the host, who had not yet recovered from his terror, and who allowed him to saddle his horse in the stable, watching him with the same amazement that he would have shown in looking at a phantom.

Chicot took advantage of this stupor not to pay his bill ; and the host refrained from making any claim.

He then went to finish his night in the public room of another inn, in the midst of all the tipplers, who were far from supposing that this tall unknown, with a smiling countenance and graceful manners, had, instead of being murdered, just killed two men.

Daybreak found him on the road, a prey to anxiety which increased at every moment. Two attempts had luckily failed ; a third might be fatal to him.

At this moment he would have come to terms with all the Guisards, even though he might have to tell them the fables he knew so well how to invent.

A clump of trees gave him apprehensions difficult to describe ; a ditch made a shiver run through his body, a high wall almost made him turn back.

From time to time he resolved that, once at Orleans, he

would send a courier to the king, demanding an escort from town to town.

But as the road to Orleans was deserted and quite safe, Chicot thought it would make him appear very much like a coward; that the king would lose his good opinion of him, and also that an escort would be very troublesome. Besides, a hundred ditches, fifty hedges, twenty walls, ten copses, had already been passed without the least suspicious object having shown itself on the branches or on the walls.

But, after Orleans, Chicot felt his terrors increase; four o'clock approached, that is to say, night. The road went through a wood and was steep as a ladder; the traveller, with his lengthening shadow thrown against the gray road, appeared like a black mark for any one wishing to send him a musket ball.

All at once Chicot heard behind him a certain noise similar to the rolling shake of the ground under galloping horses.

He turned round, and at the bottom of the hill, the middle of which he had gained, he saw some horsemen advancing at full speed.

He counted them, there were seven. Four had muskets on their shoulders.

The setting sun made each barrel shine blood-red.

The horses of these cavaliers gained rapidly upon Chicot, who, besides, had no ambition to engage in a race for speed, the result of which would have been to diminish his resources in case of attack.

He simply made his horse move in zigzag, so as to escape the balls which he expected every moment.

Chicot's deep knowledge of muskets in general and musketeers in particular, led him to employ this method; when the cavaliers were about fifty paces from him, he was saluted with four shots which, following the direction in which the cavaliers aimed, passed directly over his head.

Chicot, as we have seen, expected these four shots; he

had therefore arranged his plan beforehand. On hearing the balls whistle, he abandoned the reins, and slipped down from his horse. He had taken the precaution of drawing his sword from its scabbard, and held in his left hand a dagger, sharp as a razor, and pointed as a needle.

He dropped in such a manner that his legs were springs doubled up, but ready to distend themselves at the same time; thanks to the position taken in his fall, his head was sheltered by the breast of his horse.

A cry of joy came from the group of cavaliers, who, seeing Chicot fall, naturally supposed he was dead.

"I told you so, imbeciles," said a masked man, riding up at a gallop; "you failed, because you did not follow my orders to the letter. This time he is down; dead or alive, let him be searched; and if he moves, finish him."

"Yes, monsieur," respectfully replied one of the men in the party.

They all dismounted, with the exception of one soldier, who collected all the bridles and took care of the horses.

Chicot was not precisely a pious man; but at such a moment, he believed there was a God, that this God opened his arms to him, and that before five minutes perhaps, the sinner would appear before his judge.

He muttered a serious and fervent prayer, which was surely heard on high.

Two men approached Chicot; each had a sword in his hand.

They plainly saw that Chicot was not dead, from the manner in which he groaned.

Since he did not stir, and made no preparations to defend himself, the more zealous of the two had the imprudence to approach within reach of his left hand; instantly the dagger, as if moved by a spring, entered his throat, on which the shaft was impressed as upon wax. At the same time, half of the sword which Chicot held in his right hand disappeared in the side of the second cavalier, who had endeavored to escape.

"*Tudieu!*" cried the chief. "Treason! Load the muskets, the beggar is very much alive."

"Yes, I am alive," said Chicot, whose eyes flashed lightning; and quick as thought he threw himself upon the chief of the troop, aiming at the mask.

But two soldiers already surrounded him; he turned round, wounded one in the thigh with a heavy blow of his sword, and disengaged himself.

"Boys! boys!" cried the chief, "the muskets, *mordieu!*"

"Before the muskets are ready," said Chicot, "I shall have opened your entrails, brigand, and shall have cut the cords of your mask that I may know who you are."

"Stand firm, monsieur, stand firm, and I will aid you," said a voice, which to Chicot seemed to come from heaven.

It was the voice of a handsome young man, mounted on a fine black horse. He had a pistol in each hand, and cried to Chicot:

"Stoop down, stoop down, *morbleu!* stoop down!"

Chicot obeyed.

A pistol was fired, and a man rolled at Chicot's feet, his sword escaping from him.

The horses meantime were fighting; the three surviving cavaliers attempted to find their stirrups, but could not manage it. The young man fired another shot at the group and brought down another soldier.

"Two against two," said Chicot; "generous preserver, take yours, here is mine," and he rushed on the masked man, who, trembling with rage or fear, faced him, however, like a man accustomed to the use of arms.

On his side, the young man seized his opponent by the body, threw him to the ground, without even taking a sword in his hand, and bound him with his sash, like a lamb in the slaughter-house.

Chicot, finding himself opposed to a single adversary, recovered his presence of mind, and consequently his superiority.

He went roundly at his man, who was endowed with a certain corpulence, drove him to the ditch by the roadside, and, upon a second feint, buried the point of his sword between his ribs.

The man fell.

Chicot placing his foot on the sword of his vanquished enemy, that he might not use it again, cut with his dagger, the cords of his mask.

"M. de Mayenne!" he said. "*Ventre de Biche!* I thought so."

The duke did not reply; he had fainted, partly from loss of blood and partly from the shock of his fall.

Chicot scratched his nose in his usual manner when he had any act of great importance to perform. After a brief reflection, he tucked up his sleeve, took his large dagger, and approached the duke, for the purpose of simply and purely cutting off his head.

But he now felt a hand of iron grasping his own, and heard a voice which said to him:

"Stay, monsieur; one does not kill a fallen enemy."

"Young man," replied Chicot, "you have saved my life, it is true; I give you my heartfelt thanks for it; but accept a short lesson, very useful in the time of moral degradation in which we live. When a man has suffered three attacks in three days; when he has been each time in danger of death; when he is still quite warm with the blood of his enemies, who have fired upon him from a distance, without any provocation on his part, and with four muskets at once, as they might have done to a mad dog,—at such a time, young man, this valiant personage, permit me to tell you so, may boldly do what I am going to do."

And Chicot seized the neck of his enemy, to finish his operation.

But this time the young man again stopped him.

"You shall not do it, monsieur," he said, "while I am here, at least. Not in that way should such blood be shed

as that now issuing from the wound you have already inflicted."

"Bah!" said Chicot, with surprise, "you know this wretch?"

"This wretch is Monsieur le Duc de Mayenne, a prince equal in rank to many a king."

"All the more reason," said Chicot, in a sombre voice; "but who are you?"

"I am he who saved your life, monsieur," replied the young man, coldly.

"And who, if I am not mistaken, delivered me a letter from the king, about three days ago, near Charenton."

"Precisely."

"Then you are in the king's service, monsieur."

"I have that honor," replied the young man, bowing.

"And being in the king's service, you spare M. de Mayenne? *Mordieu!* monsieur, permit me to tell you, this is not being a good servant."

"I think, on the contrary, monsieur, that it is I who am the king's good servant at this moment."

"Perhaps!" said Chicot, sorrowfully; "perhaps! but this is not an occasion for philosophizing; what is your name?"

"Ernauton de Carmainges, monsieur."

"Well! Monsieur Ernauton de Carmainges, what shall we do with this carcase, equal in size to all the kings on earth? For as to myself, I am off, I give you notice."

"I will take charge of M. de Mayenne."

"And his follower, who is listening there, what will you do with him?"

"The poor devil hears nothing, I have bound him too tight for that, and in my opinion he has fainted."

"Come, Monsieur de Carmainges, you have saved my life to-day, but you endanger it furiously, for the future."

"I do my duty to-day, God will provide for the future."

"As you please, then; besides, I hate killing a defence-

less man, although the man is my most cruel enemy ; therefore adieu, monsieur."

And Chicot pressed the hand of Ernauton.

"Perhaps he is right," he said to himself, as he went to his horse, and then, returning :

"By the way," he said, "you have seven good horses there ; I think I have earned four to my share ; help me to choose one. Do you know much about horses ?"

"Take mine," replied Ernauton, "I know what he can do."

"Ah ! that is too much generosity ; keep him for yourself."

"No, I have not so much need as you have of going swiftly."

Chicot needed no further urging ; he mounted Ernauton's horse, and rode away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ERNAUTON DE CARMAINGES.

ERNAUTON remained on the field of battle, greatly embarrassed as to what he should do with the two enemies, who would soon open their eyes in his arms.

In the meanwhile, as there was no danger of their running away, and as it was probable that Maître Robert Briquet (it was by this name, we may remember, that Ernauton knew Chicot), and, as it was probable, we say, that Maître Robert Briquet would not return to finish them, the young man went in search of some assistance, and was not long in finding, in the very road, what he sought.

A cart, which Chicot must have passed on the road, appeared on the summit of the hill, standing in bold relief against the sky reddened by the setting sun.

The cart was drawn by two oxen, and driven by a peasant.

Ernauton accosted the conductor, who on perceiving him, had a great desire to abandon his cart, and escape into the thicket, and told him that a combat had taken place between the Huguenots and Catholics; that this combat had been fatal to four of them, but that two had survived.

The peasant, greatly alarmed at the responsibility of a good deed, but still more frightened by Ernauton's war-like appearance, assisted the young man to lift M. de Mayenne into his cart; then the soldier, who, whether in a faint or not, continued to keep his eyes closed.

There remained the four bodies.

"Monsieur," said the peasant, "were these four men Catholics or Huguenots?"

Ernauton had seen the peasant cross himself in his first terror.

"Huguenots," he said.

"In that case," replied the peasant, "there can be no harm in my searching these heretics, eh?"

"None," replied Ernauton, who thought it as well that the peasant who was helping him should get the spoils, as the first comer.

The peasant did not wait to be told twice, and turned out the pockets of the dead.

It seems that the dead had been well paid while living: the operation terminated, the face of the peasant became animated.

The result of the pleasure that spread through his body and soul was that he drove his beasts at their quickest pace, in order to reach his cottage more speedily.

It was in the stable of this excellent Catholic, on a good bed of straw, that M. de Mayenne recovered his consciousness. The pain caused by the jolting of the cart had not succeeded in reviving him; but when some spring water, poured on the wound, caused a few drops of

crimson blood to flow, the duke opened his eyes, and looked at the men and surrounding objects with a surprise easy to imagine.

As soon as M. de Mayenne had opened his eyes, Ernauton dismissed the peasant.

"Who are you, monsieur," demanded the duke.

Ernauton smiled.

"Do you not recognize me?" he said to him.

"Yes," replied the duke knitting his brow, "you are the one who came to the assistance of my enemy."

"Yes," replied Ernauton, "but I am also the one who prevented your enemy from killing you."

"That must be true," said Mayenne, "since I am alive, unless, indeed, he thought me dead."

"He left, knowing you to be alive."

"Then he thought my wound mortal."

"I do not know; but, at all events, had I not opposed him, he would have given you one which certainly would have been so."

"But in that case, monsieur, why did you aid him in killing my men and afterwards prevent him from killing me?"

"Nothing more simple, monsieur; and I am astonished that a gentleman—you appear to be one—does not understand my conduct. Chance led me on the road you were following; I saw several men attack one individual, I defended the single man, and when this brave man, to whose assistance I came (for whoever he may be, this man is brave), when this brave man, left alone with you, had decided the victory by the wound which prostrated you, then, seeing that he was about to abuse his victory by killing you, I interfered to save you."

"You knew me, then?" demanded Mayenne, with a scrutinizing glance.

"I do not want to know you, monsieur; you are a wounded man, and that was sufficient for me."

"Be frank," continued Mayenne; "you know me?"

"It is strange, monsieur, that you will not understand me; for my part, I do not consider it more noble to kill one defenceless man, than for six to attack one man on his journey."

"You admit, however," replied Mayenne, "that there might be reason for it?"

Ernauton bowed, but said nothing.

"Did you not see," continued Mayenne, "that I crossed my sword hand to hand with this man?"

"I saw it, it is true."

"Besides, this man is my mortal enemy."

"I believe it, for he told me the same thing of you."

"And if I survive my wound——"

"That is no affair of mine, and you will do as you please, monsieur."

"Do you think me very dangerously wounded?"

"I have examined your wound, monsieur, and I think that, although serious, it will not endanger your life. The sword glided along the ribs, I believe, and has not penetrated the chest. Breathe, and I think you will feel no pain in the region of the lungs."

Mayenne breathed painfully, but without interior suffering.

"It is true," he said, "but the men who were with me?"

"Are dead all but one."

"Are they left on the road?" said Mayenne.

"Yes."

"Have they been searched?"

"The peasant, whom you must have seen on opening your eyes, and who is your host, searched them."

"What did he find on them?"

"Some money."

"Any papers?"

"I think not."

"Ah!" said Mayenne, with evident satisfaction.

"Besides, you can obtain information from the one who lives."

"But where is he?"

"In the barn; close by."

"Carry me to him, or rather have him brought to me; and if you are a man of honor, as I believe, swear to me to ask him no questions."

"I am not curious, monsieur, and I wish to know no more of this affair than I know already."

The duke looked at Ernauton with lurking distrust.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "I should be glad if you would trust some one else with the commission you have just given me."

"I was wrong, monsieur, and I admit it," said Mayenne; "have the extreme kindness to render me the service I ask of you."

Five minutes later the soldier entered the stable.

He uttered an exclamation on perceiving the Duke de Mayenne, but the latter had strength enough to place his fingers on his lips; the soldier was immediately silent.

"Monsieur," said Mayenne to Ernauton, "my gratitude to you will be eternal; and no doubt, some day, we shall meet under more favorable circumstances; may I ask to whom I have the honor of speaking?"

"I am the Vicomte Ernauton de Carmainges, monsieur."

Mayenne expected further details, but it was now the young man's turn to be reserved.

"You were following the road to Beaugency, monsieur?" continued Mayenne.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then I have delayed you, and you cannot go on to-night, perhaps?"

"On the contrary, monsieur; and I intend to set out immediately."

"For Beaugency?"

Ernauton looked at Mayenne like a man whom this persistence annoyed.

"For Paris," he said.

The duke appeared astonished.

"Pardon me," continued Mayenne, "but it is strange that, going to Beaugency, and being stopped by a circumstance so unforeseen, you should return without fulfilling the object of your journey?"

"Nothing is more simple, monsieur," replied Ernauton; "I was hastening to a rendezvous; our meeting, by forcing me to remain here, has rendered it impossible to keep my appointment; therefore I return."

Mayenne tried in vain to read, on Ernauton's impassible countenance, any other thought than the one his words had expressed.

"Oh! monsieur," he said, at length, "why do you not remain with me a few days? I will send my soldier to Paris, for a surgeon. You perceive, no doubt, that I cannot remain here alone with these peasants, who are unknown to me."

"Then," replied Ernauton, "let your soldier remain with you, and I will send you a surgeon."

Mayenne hesitated.

"Do you know the name of my enemy?" he asked.

"No, monsieur."

"What! you saved his life, and he did not tell you his name?"

"I did not ask him."

"You did not ask him?"

"I have saved your life also, monsieur; have I for that reason asked you your name? But, in return, you both know mine. What necessity is there that the preserver should know the name of the man he has obliged? It is the obliged who should know the name of his preserver."

"I see, monsieur," said Mayenne, "that there is nothing to be learned from you, and that you are as discreet as you are brave."

"And I, monsieur, see that you pronounce these words as a reproach, and I regret it; in truth what alarms you, ought, on the contrary, to reassure you. He is not very

discreet with the one, who is not a little so with the other."

"You are right; your hand, Monsieur de Carmainges."

Ernauton gave him his hand, but without betraying by anything in his manner his knowledge that he was giving his hand to a prince.

"You have questioned my conduct, monsieur," continued Mayenne; "I cannot justify myself without revealing important secrets. It will be better, I think, that we carry our confidences no further."

"Observe, monsieur," replied Ernauton, "that you defend yourself without being accused. You are perfectly free, believe me, to speak or to remain silent."

"Thanks, monsieur, I shall be silent. Know, however, that I am a gentleman of good family, and in a position to be of use to you."

"Say no more, monsieur," replied Ernauton; "and be assured that I shall be as discreet respecting your credit as I have been respecting your name. Thanks to the master I serve I stand in need of no one."

"Your master!" said Mayenne, with surprise; "what master, if you please?"

"Ah! no more confidences; you proposed it yourself, monsieur," replied Ernauton.

"Right."

"Besides, your wound is beginning to inflame; I advise you to talk less."

"You are right. Ah, I must have my surgeon."

"I return to Paris, as I have had the honor of telling you; give me his address." Mayenne signed to the soldier, who approached him; and the two conversed in a low tone. With his usual discretion, Ernauton retired to a distance.

At length, after a few minutes' consultation, the duke turned round to Ernauton.

"Monsieur de Carmainges," he said, "give me your word of honor, that if I intrust you with a letter for

some one, this letter will be faithfully delivered to that person."

"I give it, monsieur."

"And I believe in it; you are too gallant a man for me not to trust you blindly."

Ernauton bowed.

"I shall tell you a part of my secret," said Mayenne: "I belong to the guards of Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier."

"Ah," said Ernauton, innocently, "Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier has her guards; I was ignorant of it."

"In these troublous times, monsieur," replied Mayenne, "every one guards himself as best he can; and the house of Guise being a princely one——"

"I demand no explanation, monsieur; you are one of the guards of Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier, that is sufficient for me."

"I continue, then; I was commissioned to make a journey to Amboise, when, on my way, I encountered my enemy; you know the rest."

"Yes," said Ernauton.

"Stopped by this wound, before accomplishing my mission, I must account to Madame la Duchesse for the cause of my delay."

"Very right."

"You will deliver, then, into her own hands the letter I shall have the honor of writing."

"Is there paper and ink here," said Ernauton, rising to search for these objects.

"It is needless," said Mayenne; "my soldier should have my tablets about him."

And the soldier, in fact, drew from his pocket some closed tablets. Mayenne turned towards the wall to touch a spring, the tablets opened and he wrote a few lines with a pencil, and closed up the tablets with the same mystery.

When closed, it was impossible, unless one knew the secret, to open them without breaking them.

"Monsieur," said the young man, "in three days the letter shall be delivered."

"Into her own hands?"

"To the Duchess of Montpensier herself."

The duke pressed the hands of this kind companion ; and exhausted, both by the conversation he had held, and by the letter he had written, he fell back, in a perspiration, upon the fresh straw.

"Monsieur," said the soldier, in a tone which, to Ernauton, appeared little in harmony with his costume, "monsieur, you bound me like a calf, it is true ; but whether you will or not, I regard these bonds as chains of friendship, and will prove it you at a fitting time and place."

And he extended a hand, the whiteness of which the young man had already noticed.

"Be it so," said Carmainges, smiling ; "it seems I have gained two additional friends."

"Don't despise them," said the soldier ; "we have never too many."

"That is true, comrade," replied Ernauton.

And he departed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE COURTYARD.

ERNAUTON set out at the same moment, and as he had taken the duke's horse in place of his own, which he had given to Robert Briquet, he travelled speedily, and reached Paris about the middle of the third day.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, he entered the Louvre, and the quarters of the Forty-Five.

No event of importance had signalized his arrival.

The Gascons, on seeing him, uttered exclamations of surprise.

M. de Loignac, hearing these cries, entered, and perceiving Ernauton, assumed his most haughty expression, which, however, did not prevent Ernauton from walking straight to him.

M. de Loignac signed to the young man to pass into the little closet situated at the end of the dormitory, a sort of audience hall, where this judge, without appeal, rendered his decrees.

"Is this the way to behave, monsieur?" he said to him at once; "you have been, if I count correctly, absent five days and five nights; and it is you, monsieur, whom I thought one of the most reasonable, who set the example of such a breach of discipline."

"Monsieur," replied Ernauton, bowing, "I have done what I was told to do."

"And what were you told to do?"

"I was told to follow M. de Mayenne, and I have followed him."

"For five days and five nights?"

"For five days and five nights, monsieur."

"The duke has left Paris, then?"

"The same evening, and that seemed to me suspicious."

"You did right, monsieur. Well?"

Ernauton then narrated briefly, but with the warmth and energy of a brave man, the adventure of the road, and the results which this adventure brought about. As he advanced in his narrative, M. de Loignac's expressive features reflected all the impressions produced in his mind by the speaker.

But when Ernauton came to the letter, confided to his care by M. de Mayenne:

"You have this letter?" exclaimed M. de Loignac.

"Yes, monsieur."

"The devil! this deserves some attention," replied the

captain ; "wait for me, monsieur, or rather, come with me, I beg you."

Ernauton followed his conductor into the courtyard of the Louvre.

They were all engaged in preparing for the king's going out ; the equipages were being arranged. M. d'Epernon was observing the trial of two horses recently arrived from England, a present from Elizabeth to Henry the Third. These two horses, remarkably well-matched, were to be harnessed to the king's coach, for the first time, to-day.

M. de Loignac (whilst Ernauton remained at the entrance of the courtyard) approached M. d'Epernon, and touched the skirt of his cloak.

"News! Monsieur le Duc," he said, "great news."

The duke left the group in which he had mingled, and approached the stairs by which the king was to descend.

"Speak, Monsieur de Loignac, speak."

"M. de Carmainges has arrived from beyond Orleans ; M. de Mayenne is lying in a village, dangerously wounded."

The duke uttered an exclamation.

"Wounded !" he repeated.

"Yes, and more," continued Loignac, "he has written to Madame de Montpensier a letter, which M. de Carmainges has in his pocket."

"Oh ! oh !" said D'Epernon ; "*parfandious !* bring Monsieur de Carmainges here, that I may speak to him myself."

Loignac took Ernauton by the hand ; the latter had, as we have said, held himself at a respectful distance during the colloquy between his chiefs.

"Monsieur le Duc," he said, "here is our traveller."

"Good ! Monsieur, you have, it seems, a letter from Monsieur le Duc de Mayenne ?" said D'Epernon.

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And addressed to Madame de Montpensier ?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Will you be good enough to hand me this letter, if you please?"

And the duke extended his hand, with the easy negligence of a man who thinks he has but to express his will, whatever it may be, to have it satisfied.

"Pardon me, monseigneur," said Carmainges, "but did you not tell me to hand you the letter from M. de Mayenne to his sister?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Monsieur le Duc cannot but be aware that this letter is confided to me."

"What matters that?"

"It matters much, monseigneur; I pledged my word to the duke that this letter would be delivered to the duchess herself."

"Do you belong to the king, or to M. de Mayenne?"

"I belong to the king, monseigneur."

"Well! the king wishes to see this letter."

"Monseigneur, you are not the king."

"I really think you forget to whom you speak, Monsieur de Carmainges," said D'Epernon, pale with anger.

"I remember perfectly, on the contrary, monseigneur; and that is why I refuse."

"You refuse; you said you refused, Monsieur de Carmainges?"

"I said so."

"Monsieur de Carmainges, you forget your oath of fidelity."

"Monseigneur, up to the present time I have sworn fidelity but to one person, and that person is his majesty. If the king demands this letter of me, he shall have it. for the king is my master, but the king is not here."

"Monsieur de Carmainges," said the duke, who was evidently getting beside himself, whilst Ernauton, on the contrary, appeared to get cooler, the more he resisted; "Monsieur de Carmainges, you are like the rest of your

countrymen, blind in prosperity. Your good fortune dazzles you, my little gentleman; the possession of a state secret stupefies you like the blow of a mallet."

"What stupefies me, Monsieur le Duc, is the disgrace into which I seem likely to fall with your lordship; not my fortune, which my refusal to obey you, renders, I know, very precarious. But no matter, I do my duty, and no more, and no one, except the king, shall have the letter you demand from me, unless it be the person to whom it is addressed."

M. d'Epernon made a terrible movement.

"Loignac," he said, "you will, at this very instant, conduct M. de Carmainges to the dungeon."

"It is certain that in this case," said Carmainges, smiling, "I shall not be able to deliver to Madame de Montpensier the letter of which I am bearer, so long at least as I remain in prison; but once out——"

"If you ever come out," said D'Epernon.

"I shall come out, monsieur, unless you have me assassinated," said Ernauton, with a resolution, which, as he spoke, became more cold and more terrible; "yes, I shall come out, the walls are less firm than my determination. Well, monsieur, once out——"

"Well! once out?"

"Why, I shall speak to the king, and the king will answer me."

"To the dungeon! to the dungeon!" roared D'Epernon, losing all control; "to the dungeon, and let them take from him his letter."

"Not one shall touch it!" exclaimed Ernauton, bounding backwards, and drawing from his bosom the tablets of Mayenne. "I will tear the letter in pieces, since I can only save it at this price. M. the Duke de Mayenne will approve my conduct, and his majesty will pardon me."

And the young man, in his loyal resistance, was about to execute his threat, when a hand gently stayed his progress.

If the pressure had been violent, no doubt the young man would have increased his efforts to destroy the letter; but finding that caution was used, he stopped, turning his head over his shoulder.

"The king!" he said.

In fact, the king, on leaving the Louvre, had descended his staircase, and stopping a moment on the last step, he had listened to the end of the discussion, and his royal hand had stayed the arm of Carmaingés.

"What is the matter, gentlemen?" he demanded, in that voice to which he could give, when he wished, a royal power.

"Sire," said D'Epernon, without giving himself the trouble to conceal his rage, "this man, one of your Forty-Five, and for that matter he shall cease to be one; this man sent by me in your name, to watch M. de Mayenne during his stay in Paris, followed him as far as Orleans, and there he has received a letter from him, addressed to Madame de Montpensier."

"You have received a letter from M. de Mayenne to Madame de Montpensier?" said the king.

"Yes, sire," replied Ernauton; "but M. the Duke D'Epernon does not tell you under what circumstances."

"Well! this letter," said the king, "where is it?"

"That is exactly the cause of quarrel, sire; M. de Carmaingés absolutely refuses to give it me, and would carry it to its address, which refusal does not betoken a good servant."

The king looked at Ernauton.

The young man bent one knee before the king.

"Sire," he said, "I am a poor gentleman, a man of honor, nothing more. I saved the life of your messenger, whom M. de Mayenne and five of his retainers were about to assassinate, for, by arriving in time, I turned the chances of combat in his favor."

"And during this combat, did nothing happen to M. de Mayenne?" said the king.

"Yes, sire, he was wounded, and grievously so."

"Good," said the king; "what then?"

"What then, sire?"

"Yes."

"Your messenger, who appeared to have some private cause of hatred against M. de Mayenne——"

The king smiled.

"Your messenger, sire, wished to kill his enemy; perhaps he had the right to do so; but I considered that in my presence, that is, in the presence of a man whose sword belongs to your majesty, this vengeance would become a political assassination, and——"

Ernauton hesitated.

"Finish," said the king.

"And I saved M. de Mayenne from your messenger, as I had saved your messenger from M. de Mayenne."

D'Epernon shrugged his shoulders, Loignac bit his long mustache, the king remained impassive.

"Continue," he said.

"M. de Mayenne, reduced to a single companion (the four others were dead), M. de Mayenne, reduced, I say, to a single companion, did not wish to part from him, and ignorant that I belonged to your majesty, trusted in me, and requested me to carry a letter to his sister. I have this letter, sire, and here it is; I offer it to your majesty to dispose of it, as you will dispose of me. My honor is dear to me, sire; but the moment I can answer my conscience with the guarantee of the royal pleasure, I place my honor fearlessly in your hands."

Ernauton, still kneeling, presented the tablets to the king.

The king pushed them gently aside with his hand.

"What were you saying, then, D'Epernon? M. de Carmainges is an honest man, and a faithful servant."

"I, sire!" said D'Epernon; "your majesty asks what I was saying?"

"Yes, did I not hear, on descending the staircase, the word 'dungeon' pronounced? *Mordieu!* quite the con-

trary ; when, by chance, we meet such a man as Monsieur de Carmainges, we should speak, like the ancient Romans, of crowns and rewards. A letter belongs to him who carries it, duke, or to him to whom it is being carried."

D'Epernon bowed, grumbling.

"You will deliver your letter, Monsieur de Carmainges."

"But, sire, think of what it might contain," said D'Epernon ; "do not trifle with delicacy, when it concerns the life of your majesty."

"You will carry your letter, Monsieur de Carmainges," repeated the king, without replying to his favorite.

"Thanks, sire," said Carmainges, retiring.

"Where do you carry it?"

"To Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier, I believe I had the honor of telling your majesty."

"I do not explain myself well ; to what address, I mean? Is it to the Hôtel de Guise, to the Hôtel Saint Denis, or to Bel——"

A look from D'Epernon stopped the king.

"I have no particular instruction from M. de Mayenne on this subject, sire ; I shall carry the letter to the Hôtel de Guise, and there I shall learn where Madame de Montpensier may be found."

"Then you will put yourself in search of the duchess?"

"Yes, sire."

"And having found her?"

"I shall deliver my letter."

"Just so. Now, Monsieur de Carmainges," and the king looked steadily at the young man.

"Sire?"

"Have you sworn, or promised, aught else to M. de Mayenne than to deliver this letter into the hands of his sister?"

"No, sire."

"You have not promised, for example," insisted the king, "secrecy as to the place in which you might find the duchess?"

"No, sire, I have promised nothing of the sort."

"I shall impose upon you, then, but one condition, *monsieur*."

"Sire, I am your majesty's servant."

"You will deliver this letter to Madame de Montpensier, and you will immediately join me at Vincennes, where I shall be to-night."

"Yes, sire."

"And you will render me a faithful account of where you found the duchess."

"Sire, your majesty may rely upon it."

"Without other explanation or confidence, do you hear?"

"Sire, I promise it."

"What imprudence!" said the Duke d'Epéron; "oh, sire!"

"You have not much knowledge of men, duke, or, at least, of certain men. This one is loyal to Mayenne, he will, therefore, be loyal to me."

"To you, sire, I shall be more than loyal!" exclaimed Ernauton; "I shall be devoted."

"Now, D'Epéron," said the king, "no more quarrels; and you must at once forgive this brave fellow for what you considered a want of devotion, and for what I look upon as a proof of loyalty."

"Sire," said Carmainges, "M. the Duke d'Epéron is too superior a man not to have seen, in the midst of my disobedience to his orders (a disobedience for which I confess my sincere regret), my respect and love for him, only I did, above all, what I considered my duty."

"*Purfandious!*" said the duke, changing his countenance with the same ease that he would a mask; "this has done you honor, my dear Carmainges, and you are really a fine fellow; is it not so, Loignac? But, in the meantime, we gave him a good fright."

And the duke burst out laughing.

Loignac turned upon his heel to save himself from re-

plying ; Gascon though he was, he could not lie with the same effrontery as his illustrious chief.

"It was a trial?" said the king, doubtfully; "so much the better, D'Epernon, if it was a trial; but I do not advise you to have these trials with every one, too many men would sink under them."

"So much the better," repeated Carmaingès, in his turn; "so much the better, Monsieur le Duc, if it is a trial; I am sure, in that case, of your lordship's good graces."

But, while saying these words, the young man appeared as little credulous as the king.

"Well, now that all is ended, gentlemen," said Henry, "let us go."

D'Epernon bowed.

"You accompany me, duke?"

"That is, I accompany your majesty on horseback; it is the order you have given, I believe."

"Yes. Who will attend the other door?" demanded Henry.

"A devoted servant of your majesty," said D'Epernon, "M. de Sainte Maline:" and he observed the effect this name produced on Ernauton.

Ernauton remained unmoved.

"Loignac," he added, "call M. de Sainte Maline."

"Monsieur de Carmaingès," said the king, who perceived the Duc d'Epernon's intention, "you are going to execute your commission, are you not, and return immediately to Vincennes?"

"Yes, sire."

And Ernauton, despite his philosophy, departed, quite pleased at not being present at the triumph which would cause the ambitious heart of Sainte Maline to rejoice.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SEVEN SINS OF MAGDALENE.

THE king had glanced at his horses, and seeing them so vigorous and so lively, he was unwilling to risk being alone in his carriage; in consequence, after having, as we have seen, done justice to Ernauton, he made a sign to the duke to take a place in his coach.

Loignac and Sainte Maline rode on either side, and a single outrider in front.

The duke occupied by himself the front seat of the heavy vehicle, and the king, with all his dogs, had settled himself on the cushion opposite.

Among all these dogs, there was one favorite; this was the one we have seen on his knee, at the window of the Hôtel de Ville, and which had a private cushion, upon which he gently slept.

To the right of the king was a table, the feet of which were fastened to the floor of the coach; this table was covered with illuminated designs which his majesty cut out with a marvellous dexterity despite the jolting of the carriage.

They were, for the most part, sacred subjects. However, as there was in the religion of this period a somewhat tolerant mixture of heathenish ideas, mythology was quite well represented in the religious designs of the king.

For the moment, Henry, who, always methodical, had made a choice among these designs, occupied himself in cutting out the life of Magdalene the Sinner.

The subject was somewhat picturesque in itself, and

the imagination of the painter had further added to the natural disposition of the subject ; we beheld Magdalene, young, beautiful, and admired ; sumptuous baths, balls, and pleasures of all sorts figured in the collection.

The artist had the ingenious idea which Callot had at a later period, in his *Temptation of Saint Anthony* ; the artist, we say, had the ingenious idea of covering the caprices of his brain with the legitimate mantle of ecclesiastical authority, so that each design, with the running title of the seven capital sins, was explained by a particular label.

Magdalene yields to the sin of anger.

Magdalene yields to the sin of gluttony.

Magdalene yields to the sin of pride.

Magdalene yields to the sin of lust.

And so with the others, to the seventh and last capital sin.

The image which the king was occupied in cutting out, when they passed the *Porte Saint Antoine*, represented Magdalene, yielding to the sin of anger.

The beautiful sinner, half reclining on cushions, and with no other covering than the magnificent golden tresses with which she was afterwards to wipe the perfumed feet of Christ ; the beautiful sinner, we say, was having a slave, who had broken a precious vase, thrown into a pond filled with lampreys, whose eager heads rose above the water, like the muzzles of so many serpents, while on the left, a woman, still less covered than herself, as her hair was collected into a knot, was being flogged because she had, while dressing her mistress's head, pulled out some of those magnificent hairs, the profusion of which should have rendered Magdalene more indulgent for a fault of this kind.

In the background of the picture some dogs were being whipped, for having allowed to pass, with impunity, some poor beggars seeking charity, and cocks were being slaughtered, for having crowed too loud and too early.

On arriving at the Croix Faubin, the king had already cut out all the figures of this image, and was preparing to pass to the one entitled :

Magdalene yielding to the sin of gluttony.

This represented the beautiful sinner lying on one of those couches of purple and gold, on which the ancients took their repasts; all that the Roman gastronomers knew of the choicest viands, in fish and fruit, from dormice in wine, and mullets in Falerno, to the Stromboli lobsters and Sicilian pomegranates, ornamented the table. On the ground, the dogs were disputing for a pheasant, whilst the air was obscured by birds of a thousand colors, that carried off, from this blessed table, figs, strawberries, and cherries, sometimes dropping them on a population of mice, who, with their noses in the air, awaited this manna from heaven.

Magdalene held in her hand, and filled with liquor as yellow as the topaz, one of those singularly shaped glasses such as Petronius described in the feast of Trimalcyon.

Deeply engaged in this important work, the king had merely raised his eyes, on passing in front of the priory of the Jacobins, whose bell was calling all the monks to vespers.

All the doors and windows of the said priory were so well closed that one would have supposed it uninhabited, had it not been for the sound of the bell coming from the interior.

Having given this glance, the king once more returned to his work of cutting out images.

But a hundred paces beyond, an attentive observer would have seen him throw a more inquisitive glance at a house of good appearance situated on the left side of the road, in the midst of a beautiful garden, its iron gate, with gilded spikes, leading to the high-road.

This country-house was called Bel Esbat.

Quite a contrast to the convent of the Jacobins, Bel Esbat

had all its windows open, with the exception of one before which hung a Venetian blind.

Just as the king passed, this blind appeared to shake slightly.

The king exchanged a glance and a smile with the duke, and fell to work on another capital sin.

This latter was the sin of lust.

The artist had represented it in such frightful colors, he had stigmatized the sin with such courage and fidelity, that we can only mention a single feature of it which, however, was but an episode.

Magdalene's guardian angel was flying back to heaven in terror, hiding his face in his two hands.

This scene, full of minute details, so absorbed the attention of the king, that he continued at his work, without noticing a certain image of vanity who rode at the left door of his carriage.

This was a great pity, for Sainte Maline was very happy, and very proud, on his horse.

He, so near the king; he, a younger son from Gascony, able to hear his majesty the most Christian king, when he said to his dog:

"Very fine! Master Love, you worry me!"

Or to M. the Duke d'Epemon, colonel-general of the infantry of the kingdom:

"Duke, I think these horses will break my neck."

From time to time, however, as if pride were to have a fall, Sainte Maline glanced at Loignac, who was too accustomed to honors not to be indifferent to them; he could not but think that this gentleman was handsomer, with his calm mien, and modest and military appearance, than he with all his swaggering airs. Sainte Maline tried to moderate himself, but presently certain ideas revived his savage vanity.

"They see me, they look at me," he said; "and they inquire, 'Who is that happy gentleman accompanying the king?'"

At the pace they were going, and which did not justify the apprehensions of the king, Sainte Maline's happiness seemed likely to continue some time; for Queen Elizabeth's horses, loaded with the weighty harness all covered with silver and fringe, imprisoned in shafts like those of David, did not advance rapidly in the direction of Vincennes.

But as he was growing too proud, something like a warning from above, something particularly annoying to him, came to allay his joy; he heard the king pronounce the name of Ernauton.

Two or three times, in as many minutes, the king pronounced this name.

Upon each occasion, Sainte Maline stooped down, to catch, on the wing, this interesting enigma.

But like all things really interesting, the enigma was interrupted by some incident or noise.

The king uttered some exclamation of regret at an unlucky gash made with the scissors, or else an injunction to be silent, addressed with all possible tenderness, to Master Love, who yelped with the visible, but exaggerated, pretension of making as much noise as a big dog.

The fact is that between Paris and Vincennes, the name of Ernauton was pronounced at least six times by the king, and at least four by the Duke, without Sainte Maline's being enabled to understand to what these ten repetitions could refer.

He imagined (we always like to deceive ourselves) that it consisted, on the part of the king, of an inquiry into the cause of the young man's disappearance, and on the part of D'Epernon, an explanation of this cause, whether assumed or real.

At length they arrived at Vincennes.

The king had three sins remaining to be cut. Under the specious pretext of giving himself up to this grave occupation, his majesty shut himself up in his chamber on descending from his coach.

The wind that whistled out of doors, was of the coldest, and Sainte Maline had settled himself near the large chimney, where he intended warming himself, and sleeping whilst so doing, when Loignac placed his hand upon his shoulder.

"You are on service to-day," he said to him, in that cutting tone which only belongs to the man who, having long obeyed, knows in turn how to be obeyed; "you shall sleep some other night; so get up, Monsieur de Sainte Maline."

"I will keep awake for a fortnight at a stretch, if necessary, monsieur," replied the other.

"I am sorry I have no one at hand," said Loignac, pretending to look about him.

"Monsieur," interrupted Sainte Maline, "it is unnecessary for you to seek another; if requisite, I will not sleep for a month."

"Oh! we shall not be so exacting as that; be assured."

"What is to be done, monsieur?"

"Get on your horse, and return to Paris."

"I am ready; my horse is standing saddled in his box."

"Very well. You will go straight to the quarters of the Forty-Five."

"Yes, monsieur."

"There you will wake them all, but in such a way that except the three chiefs, whom I shall name to you, not one may know where he is going, nor what he is to do."

"I will obey these first instructions implicitly."

"Here are the others; you will leave fourteen of these gentlemen at the Porte Saint Antoine; fifteen others half-way, and the remaining fourteen you will bring here."

"Consider it done, Monsieur de Loignac; but at what hour must we leave Paris?"

"At dusk."

"On foot, or on horseback?"

"On horseback."

"What arms?"

"All; dagger, sword, and pistols."

"Cuirasses!"

"Cuirasses."

"The rest of the orders, monsieur?"

"Here are three letters: one for M. de Chalabre, one for M. de Biran, and one for yourself. M. de Chalabre will command the first squad, M. de Biran the second, you the third."

"Good, monsieur."

"You will not open these letters till on the ground, at the stroke of six. M. de Chalabre will open his at the Porte Saint Antoine—M. de Biran, at the Croix Faubin—you, at the gate of the Donjon."

"Must we come quickly?"

"With all the speed of your horses, without creating any suspicion, however, or making yourselves noticed. Let each troop leave Paris by a different gate. M. de Chalabre, the Porte Bourdelle—M. de Biran, the Porte du Temple—you, who have the longest road, will take the direct route, that is, the Porte Saint Antoine."

"Very well, monsieur."

"The remaining instructions are in these three letters. Now go."

Sainte Maline bowed, and prepared to go.

"By the way!" said Loignac, "from here to the Croix Faubin, go as fast you like; but from the Croix Faubin to the gate, go slowly; you have still two hours before dark, it is more time than you require."

"Exactly so, monsieur."

"Have you understood, or do you wish me to repeat the order?"

"It is unnecessary, monsieur."

"I wish you a good journey, Monsieur de Sainte Maline!" And Loignac, trailing his spurs after him, re-entered the apartments.

"Fourteen in the first troop, fifteen in the second, and

fifteen in the third; it is evident they do not count upon Ernauton, and that he is no longer one of the Forty-Five."

Sainte Maline, puffed up with pride, executed his commission like an important, but punctual man.

Half an hour after his departure from Vincennes, having followed all the instructions of Loignac to the letter, he cleared the barrier. In another quarter of an hour he was at the quarters of the Forty-Five.

The majority of these gentlemen were already enjoying in their rooms the odor of supper, which was being prepared in the respective kitchens of their housekeepers.

Thus the noble Lardille de Chaventrade had cooked a dish of mutton and carrots, with spices, that is, after the method of Gascony, a savory dish, to which, on his side, Militor was paying some attention with an iron fork, by the aid of which he experimented on the degree of perfection to which, in the way of cooking, the meats and vegetables had arrived.

Thus Pertinax de Monterabeau, with the aid of that singular domestic who treated him with so much familiarity but would suffer none; Pertinax de Monterabeau, we say, exercised for a squad, who shared the expenses, his own culinary talents. The *club*, founded by this skilful administrator, united eight associates, who each paid six sols for the repast.

M. de Chalabre apparently never ate; he was looked upon as a mythological being placed by nature above common wants.

What made his divine nature doubtful was his leanness.

He watched his companions breakfast, dine and sup, like a proud cat who will not beg, but who is still hungry, and who, to appease his hunger, licks his mustaches. It is just, however, to observe that when they offered him, and they offered but seldom, he refused; having, he said, the last morsels in his mouth, and the last morsels were never

less than partridges, pheasants, cartarellas, larks, woodcock pies, and rare fish.

The whole had been usually washed down with a profusion of Spanish and other wines of the best vintages, such as Malaga, Cyprus and Syracuse.

Each one, as we see, disposed according to his pleasure of the cash of his majesty Henry the Third.

For the rest, one might judge of the character of each man from the aspect of his little lodging. Some loved flowers, and cultivated in a broken jug some consumptive rose-tree or jaundiced creeping-plant; others had, like the king, a taste for pictures, without his skill in cutting them out; others, lastly, had introduced into their lodging the niece or the housekeeper.

M. d'Epernon had privately told Loignac that, the Forty-Five not inhabiting the interior of the Louvre, he might shut his eyes on this point; and Loignac closed his eyes.

Nevertheless, when the trumpet sounded, all these men became soldiers and slaves of a rigorous discipline,—mounted their horses, and held themselves in readiness.

At eight in winter, they retired to bed, at ten in summer; but fifteen only slept, fifteen others slept with one eye open, and the others slept not at all.

As it was only half-past five in the evening, Sainte Maline found all his men astir, and most gastronomically inclined.

But with a single word he cleared away all these dishes.

“To horse, gentlemen,” he said.

And leaving the majority to the confusion of this manœuvre, he explained the orders to Messieurs de Biran and de Chalabre.

Some, while buckling on their belts and fastening their cuirasses, swallowed a few mouthfuls, moistened by a large draught of wine; others, whose supper was less advanced, armed themselves with resignation.

M. de Chalabre alone, tightening the belt of his sword with the tongue of a buckle, pretended to have supped more than an hour before.

The roll was called.

Only forty-four answered, including Sainte Maline.

"M. Ernauton de Carmainges is missing," said M. de Chalabre, whose turn it was to exercise the functions of quartermaster.

Sainte Maline's heart was full of joy and a smile played upon his lip, a rare thing with this man, of a sombre and envious temperament.

In fact, in the eyes of Sainte Maline, Ernauton irretrievably ruined himself by this unexplained absence at the moment of an expedition of this importance.

The Forty-Five, or rather the forty-four, set out, each squad by the appointed road; namely, M. de Chalabre, with thirteen men, by the Porte Bourdelle.

M. de Biran, with fourteen, by the Porte du Temple.

And lastly, M. de Sainte Maline, with fourteen others, by the Porte Saint Antoine.

CHAPTER XLI.

BEL ESBAT.

It is needless to observe that Ernauton, whom Sainte Maline believed so utterly ruined, was on the contrary pursuing the unexpected course of his rising fortune.

He had at first very naturally supposed that the Duchess of Montpensier, whom he was sent to find, must be at the Hôtel de Guise, since she had arrived in Paris.

Ernauton therefore directed his steps to the Hôtel de Guise.

There, after knocking at the large door, which was

opened to him with extreme caution, he was only laughed at when he demanded the honor of an interview with Madame the Duchess of Montpensier.

But, as he insisted, he was told he ought to know that her highness lived at Soissons, and not in Paris.

Ernauton expected this reply, so it did not disturb him.

"I am grieved at this absence," he said; "I had a communication of the highest importance to make to her highness from M. le Duc de Mayenne."

"From the Duc de Mayenne!" said the porter; "and who has charged you with this communication?"

"M. de Mayenne himself."

"Charged! he, the duke!" exclaimed the porter, with an admirably feigned astonishment; "where did he charge you with this communication? M. le Duc is no more in Paris than Madame la Duchesse!"

"I am well aware of it," replied Ernauton; "but I also might not have been in Paris; I also might have met M. le Duc elsewhere than in Paris; on the road to Blois, for instance."

"On the road to Blois?" said the porter, a little attentive.

"Yes, and on this road he might have met me, and charged me with a message for Madame la Duchesse."

A slight alarm appeared on the countenance of the questioner, who meanwhile, as if fearing an entrance by force, kept the door half opened.

"Then," he demanded, "where is the message?"

"I have it."

"About you?"

"Here," said Ernauton, striking his bosom.

The faithful servant fixed upon Ernauton a scrutinizing look.

"You say you have this message about you?" he said.

"Yes."

"And that this message is important?"

"Of the greatest importance."

"Will you allow me simply to look at it?"

"Willingly."

And Ernauton drew from his bosom M. de Mayenne's letter.

"Oh! oh! what singular ink!" said the porter.

"It is blood," coolly replied Ernauton.

The servant turned pale at these words, and more so, no doubt, at the idea that this blood might be the blood of M. de Mayenne.

In those times, there was a dearth of ink, but a great abundance of bloodshed; and the result was, that lovers frequently wrote to their mistresses, and absent relations to their families, with the fluid most in abundance.

"Monsieur," said the attendant, in great haste, "I know not whether you will find Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier in Paris or the vicinity of Paris, but at all events, will you have the goodness to repair without delay to a house in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, which they call Bel Esbat, and which belongs to Madame la Duchesse. You will recognize it, seeing that it is the first on the left hand side going to Vincennes, after the convent of the Jacobins; you will be sure to find there some person in the service of the Duchesse, sufficiently in her intimacy to be able to inform you where Madame la Duchesse may be at this moment."

"Very well," said Ernauton, who understood that the attendant would not, or could not say more; "thank you."

"In the Faubourg Saint Antoine," repeated the servant. "Every one knows, and will point out Bel Esbat, although they are ignorant that it belongs to Madame de Montpensier; Madame de Montpensier having purchased this house only a short time ago to be used as a retreat."

Ernauton made a sign with his head, and turned towards the Faubourg Saint Antoine.

Without asking for information, he had no difficulty in

finding the house Bel Esbat, contiguous to the priory of the Jacobins.

He pulled a bell; the door opened.

"Enter," said some one.

He entered and the door closed behind him.

Once introduced, they seemed to expect him to give a pass-word, but as he contented himself with looking around him, they asked him what he wanted.

"I wish to speak to Madame la Duchesse," said the young man.

"And why are you come to Bel Esbat to see Madame la Duchesse," demanded the valet.

"Because," replied Ernauton, "the porter at the Hôtel de Guise sent me here."

"Madame la Duchesse is no more at Bel Esbat than in Paris," replied the valet.

"In that case," said Ernauton, "I shall defer to a more propitious moment, acquitting myself towards her of the commission which M. le Duc de Mayenne entrusted to me."

"For her, for Madame la Duchesse?"

"For Madame la Duchesse."

"A commission from Monsieur le Duc de Mayenne?"

"Yes."

The valet reflected a moment.

"Monsieur," he said, "I cannot take upon myself to reply to you; but I have a superior whom it is necessary I should consult: will you wait?"

"They are well served here, *mordieu!*" said Ernauton; "what order, what discipline, what exactitude! certainly these men must be very dangerous, if they find it necessary to be so well guarded. One cannot enter the hotel of the Messieurs de Guise, as one can at the Louvre, I must confess; so I shall begin to think that it is not the real King of France I serve."

He looked around him; the courtyard was deserted, but all the doors of the stables were open, as though

they expected some troop to enter and take up quarters there.

Ernauton was interrupted in his examination by the valet who returned; he was followed by another valet.

"Leave your horse to me, monsieur," he said, "and follow my comrade; you will find some one who can answer you much better than I can."

Ernauton followed the valet, waited an instant in a sort of antechamber, and shortly afterwards, upon the order which the attendant had received, was shown into a small adjoining room where a simply, though elegantly, dressed lady was seated at an embroidery frame.

Her back was turned towards Ernauton.

"Here is the gentleman who comes on the part of M. de Mayenne, madame," said the lackey.

She made a movement.

Ernauton uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"You, madame," he exclaimed, on recognizing at once his page, and the stranger of the litter, under this third transformation.

"You!" exclaimed the lady, in turn, letting her work drop, and looking at Ernauton.

And making a sign to the lackey, "Leave us," she said.

"You are of the household of Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier, madame?" said Ernauton, with surprise.

"Yes," said the unknown; "but you, you, monsieur, how do you bring here a message from M. de Mayenne?"

"Through a series of circumstances which I could not foresee, and which it would take too long to repeat," said Ernauton, with extreme caution.

"Oh! you are discreet, monsieur," continued the lady, smiling.

"Whenever it is necessary, I am so, madame."

"But I see no occasion here for such great discretion," said the stranger; "for if you really bring a message from the person you say——"

Ernauton made another movement.



THE RECOGNITION.

"Ah! don't be angry; if you bring a message indeed from the person you mention, the matter interests me so much that in remembrance of our acquaintance, short though it was, you should tell it to me."

The lady introduced into her last words all the cheerful, caressing, and seductive grace that a pretty woman could employ.

"Madame," replied Ernauton, "you will not make me say what I do not know."

"And still less what you will not tell."

"I have nothing to say, madame," replied Ernauton, bowing.

"Do as you like respecting verbal communications, monsieur."

"I have no verbal communications to make, madame; the whole of my mission consists in delivering a letter to her highness."

"Well! this letter, then?" said the unknown lady, extending her hand.

"This letter?" said Ernauton.

"Will you be good enough to deliver it to us?"

"Madame," said Ernauton, "I believe I have had the honor of informing you that this letter is addressed to Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier."

"But as the duchess is absent, I represent her here," said the lady, impatiently; "you may then——"

"I cannot."

"Do you distrust me, monsieur?"

"I ought to, madame," said the young man, with an expression in which there could be no mistake; "but, despite the mystery of your conduct, you have inspired me, I confess, with other sentiments than those of which you speak."

"Really!" exclaimed the lady, blushing a little under Ernauton's passionate gaze.

Ernauton bowed.

"Take care, Sir Messenger," she said, smiling, "you are making a declaration of love."

"Why, yes, madame," said Ernauton; "I know not if I shall ever see you again, and really the opportunity is too precious for me to let it escape."

"In that case, monsieur, I understand."

"That I love you, madame? it is easily understood, indeed."

"No, but I understand how you came here."

"Ah! pardon, madame," said Ernauton; "now it is I who do not understand."

"Yes, I understand that wishing to see me again you invented a pretext for introducing yourself here."

"I, madame, a pretext! Ah! you judge me wrongly. I was ignorant if I should ever see you again, and I left everything to chance, which, twice already, had thrown me in your way. But invent a pretext, I, never! I am a strange being, and I do not think in all matters like the rest of the world."

"Ah! ah! you are in love, you say, and you have scruples as to the manner of seeing the person you love? This is very fine, monsieur," said the lady, with a certain mock pride; "well! I suspected that you would have scruples."

"Wherefore, madame, if you please?" demanded Ernauton.

"The other day you met me; I was in a litter; you recognized me, and yet you did not follow me."

"Take care, madame," said Ernauton, "you confess that you noticed me."

"Ah! why not! Have we not met under circumstances which permit *me*, especially, to put my head out of my litter to look after you when you passed. But no; monsieur departed at a smart gallop, after uttering an 'ah!' which made me tremble in my litter."

"I was compelled to leave, madame."

"By your scruples?"

"No, madame, by my duty."

"Come, come," said the lady, smiling, "I see that you

are a reasonable and circumspect lover, who above all things fears to compromise himself."

"If you had inspired me with certain fears," replied Ernauton, "there would be nothing astonishing in that. Is it customary, tell me, for a woman to dress herself as a man, force the barriers, and view the quartering of a wretch at the Grève, using meanwhile all sorts of gesticulations utterly incomprehensible?"

The lady turned slightly pale, but concealed her pallor if we may so speak, under a smile.

Ernauton continued :

"Is it natural, indeed, that this lady, after she has taken this strange pleasure, fearful of being arrested, should fly as though she were a thief; she who is in the service of Madame de Montpensier, a powerful princess, though not much in favor at court?"

The lady, this time, smiled again, but more ironically.

"You have but little perspicuity, monsieur, despite your pretension to be an observer," she said; "for, with a little sense, all that appears to you obscure would have been explained to you at the same moment. Was it not very natural, in the first place, that Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier should be interested in the fate of M. de Salcede, in what he might be tempted to say, in his revelations, true or false, and very likely to compromise the house of Lorraine. And if that was natural, monsieur, was it less so that this princess should send some safe, trustworthy person in whom she could place every confidence, to be present at the execution, and state, from her own knowledge, as they say at the palace, the minutest details of the affair? Well! monsieur, this person was myself; it was I—I, the confidant of her highness. Now, let us see, do you think I could enter Paris when every barrier was closed? Do you think I could appear at the Grève in my woman's dress? Now that you know my position with the princess, do you think I could remain indifferent

to the sufferings of the patient, and to his possible revelations?"

"You are perfectly right, madame," said Ernauton, bowing; "and now, I swear to you, I admire your spirit and your logic as much as I did your beauty."

"Many thanks, monsieur. But now that we know each other, and everything has been explained between us, give me the letter, since the letter exists, and is not a mere pretext."

"Impossible, madame."

The stranger made an effort to restrain her feelings.

"Impossible?" she repeated.

"Yes, impossible; for I have sworn to M. de Mayenne to deliver this letter into the hands of the Duchesse de Montpensier herself."

"Say, rather," exclaimed the lady, giving way to her irritation, "say, rather, that the letter does not exist; say that, despite your pretended scruples, the letter was only a pretext for getting in here; that you had resolved to see me, and nothing more. Well, monsieur, you are satisfied; you are not only here; you have not only seen me, but you have also told me that you adore me."

"In that, as in all the rest, madame, I have told you the truth."

"Well! be it so, you adore me; you wished to see me, you have seen me; I have procured you a pleasure in exchange for a service. We are quits. Adieu."

"I will obey you, madame," said Ernauton, "and since you dismiss me, I will go."

The lady's irritation now broke out in real earnest.

"Yes!" she said: "but if you know me, I do not know you. Does it not seem to you that you have too many advantages over me? Ah! you think it is sufficient to enter, under some pretext, into the house of a princess, for you are here in the house of Madame de Montpensier, monsieur; and to say, 'I have succeeded in my perfidy, and I with-

draw.' Ah monsieur, this is not the behavior of a gallant man."

"It seems to me, madame," said Ernauton, "that you are very hard on what would have been after all only a trick of love, if it had not been, as I have had the honor of telling you, an affair of the greatest importance, and the strictest truth. I shall not notice your cruel expressions, madame; and shall absolutely forget anything I may have said, whether affectionate or tender, since you are so ill-disposed towards me. But I shall not leave here under the weight of the undeserved suspicions to which you have subjected me. I have, in fact, a letter from M. de Mayenne to deliver to Madame de Montpensier, and that letter is here: it is written with his own hand, as you may see from the handwriting and address."

Ernauton showed the letter to the lady, but without delivering it.

The stranger glanced at it, and exclaimed:

"His writing! blood!"

Without making any reply, Ernauton replaced the letter in his bosom, bowed a last time with his habitual courtesy, and very pale and bitterly hurt, he turned towards the entrance of the apartment.

This time she ran after him, and, like Joseph, he was seized by the cloak.

"What is your pleasure, madame?" he said.

"For pity's sake, pardon me," exclaimed the lady; "has any accident happened to the duke?"

"Whether I pardon or not, madame, it is all one," said Ernauton; "as to the letter, since you ask pardon for the mere purpose of reading it, and as Madame de Montpensier alone shall read it——"

"Eh! wretched madman that you are," exclaimed the duchess, with a majestic fury; "do you not recognize me, or rather do you not guess me to be supreme mistress? And are these the eyes of a servant? I am the Duchesse de Montpensier; give me the letter."

"You are the duchess!" exclaimed Ernauton, recoiling with stupefaction.

"Eh! undoubtedly. Come, come, give it; do you not see that I am in haste to know what has happened to my brother?"

But instead of obeying, as the duchess expected, the young man, having recovered his first surprise, folded his arms.

"How would you have me believe your words," he said—"you whose mouth has already deceived me twice?"

Her eyes, which the duchess had already invoked to the support of her words, now shot forth fire; but Ernauton bravely sustained the flame.

"You still doubt—you want proofs, when I affirm," exclaimed the imperious dame, tearing her lace ruffles with her pretty little nails.

"Yes, madame," coldly replied Ernauton.

The stranger rushed to a little hand-bell, which she nearly broke, so violent was the force with which she sounded it.

The vibration resounded throughout every adjoining apartment, and before it had ceased a valet appeared.

"What does madame require?" said the valet.

She stamped with rage.

"Mayneville," she said—"I wish to see Mayneville. Is he not here?"

"Yes, madame."

"Well, let him come, then?"

The valet hastened from the apartment. A minute later Mayneville entered quickly.

"At your orders, madame," said Mayneville.

"Madame! And since when have I been called simply Madame, Monsieur de Mayneville?" said the duchess, exasperated.

"At your highness's orders," said Mayneville, bowing, and surprised even to amazement.

"It is well," said Ernauton, "for I have before me a

gentleman, and if he tells me a falsehood, by Heaven! I shall at least know what to do."

"You have faith at last!" said the duchess.

"Yes, madame, I believe; and as a proof, here is the letter."

And the young man, bowing, handed to Madame de Montpensier the letter so long disputed.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LETTER OF M. DE MAYENNE.

THE duchess seized the letter, opened it, and read it eagerly, without even attempting to conceal the impressions, which followed each other on her features, like the fleeting and driving clouds when the hurricane is blowing.

When she had finished, she handed the letter to Mayneville, as uneasy as herself. The letter was in these words:

"MY SISTER—I tried myself to do the business of a captain, or master of arms; I have been punished.

"I have received a sword-wound from the fellow whom you know, and with whom I have for some time had an account. The worst of all this is, that he killed five of my men, among whom are Boularon and Desnorses, that is to say, two of my best; after which he fled.

"I must say that he was greatly assisted in this victory by the bearer of this letter, a charming young man, as you may see. I recommend him to you; he is discretion itself.

"One merit he will have in your eyes, I presume, my very dear sister, is that of having prevented my vanquisher from decapitating me; the which vanquisher had a great

desire to do so, having torn off my mask when I had fainted, and recognized me.

"I recommend you, sister, to discover the name and profession of this discreet cavalier; to me he is suspicious though interesting. To all my offers of service he contented himself with replying, that the master he serves lets him want for nothing.

"I cannot tell you more on his account, for I tell you all I know; he pretends not to know me. Observe this.

"I am suffering much, but without danger of death, I believe. Send me my surgeon quickly; I am lying like a horse, upon straw; the bearer will inform you of the place.

"Your affectionate brother.

"MAYENNE."

When they had finished reading, the duchess and Mayneville looked at each other in astonishment.

The duchess first broke the silence, which had been badly interpreted by Ernauton.

"To whom," demanded the duchess, "are we indebted for the signal service you have rendered us, monsieur?"

"To a man who, whenever the occasion presents itself, helps the weak against the strong."

"Will you give me some details, monsieur?" continued Madame de Montpensier.

Ernauton narrated all he knew, and indicated the retreat of the duke. Madame de Montpensier and Mayneville listened to him with an interest easily imagined. When he had finished:

"May I hope, monsieur," said the duchess, "you will continue the work so well begun, and that you will attach yourself to our house?"

These words, pronounced in that gracious tone which the duchess knew so well how to assume occasionally, implied a very flattering meaning after the avowal made by Ernauton to the lady-in-waiting of the duchess; but the young man, throwing vanity aside, reduced these words to their signification of simple curiosity.

He saw plainly that concealment of his name and position would open the eyes of the duchess as to the consequences of this event; he knew also that the king, in making it a condition that he should reveal to him the duchess's place of abode, had some object in view.

Two interests struggled within him: as a man in love, he could sacrifice one; as a man of honor, he could not abandon the other.

The temptation was all the stronger, that by avowing his position near the king, he would gain an immense importance in the mind of the duchess; and it was no light consideration for a young man, arriving straight from Gascony, to be important in the eyes of the Duchess of Montpensier.

Sainte Maline would not have hesitated an instant.

All these reflections rushed through Ernauton's mind, but had no other influence than to give him a little more pride, and consequently a little more firmness.

It was a great deal to be, at this moment, something; much for him, certainly, at that time when they had well-nigh taken him for a plaything.

The duchess awaited his reply to the question she had put to him: "Are you disposed to attach yourself to our house?"

"Madame," said Ernauton, "I have already had the honor of informing M. de Mayenne that I serve a good master, who treats me too well for me to desire any other."

"My brother tells me in his letter, monsieur, that you did not seem to recognize him. Not having recognized him yonder, how came you to use his name here, to obtain an introduction to me?"

"M. de Mayenne seemed desirous to preserve his incognito, madame; I did not think it my duty to recognize him. And it might have been imprudent to allow the peasants, with whom he is lodged, to know the illustrious and wounded man on whom they have bestowed their

hospitality. Here there no longer existed any reason for secrecy ; on the contrary, the name of M. de Mayenne being a passport to you, I made use of it ; in this case, as in the other, I think I have acted rightly."

Mayneville looked at the duchess, as much as to say :

"You see he is a clever man, madame."

The duchess understood him exactly. She looked at Ernauton, smiling.

"No one could extricate himself better from an embarrassing question," she said ; "and you are, I must confess, a clever man."

"I see no cleverness in what I have had the honor of telling you, madame," replied Ernauton.

"Well, monsieur," said the duchess, with some impatience, "what I clearly see in all this, is, that you will say nothing. Probably you do not reflect that gratitude is a heavy burden for one who bears my name ; that I am a woman ; that you have twice rendered me a service ; and that I really wish to know your name, or rather who you are."

"I am aware of all this, madame ; I know that you will easily learn it ; but you will learn it from another than myself ; and I shall have said nothing."

"He is still right," said the duchess, fixing upon Ernauton a glance, which, if he understood all its meaning, must have given him more pleasure than any glance had yet done."

He, therefore, asked no more ; but, like the gourmand who rises from table when he thinks he has drunk the best wine of the repast, Ernauton bowed, and took leave of the duchess, upon this happy manifestation.

"This is all you have to say to me, then, monsieur ?" inquired the duchess.

"I have executed my commission," replied the young man ; "and it only remains for me to present my very humble respects to your highness."

The duchess followed him with her eyes, without

returning his salutation ; and, when the door had closed upon him :

“ Mayneville,” she said, stamping with her foot, “ have this young man followed.”

“ Impossible, madame,” replied the latter ; “ all our household are out ; I myself am waiting for the event ; it is a bad day on which to do anything else than what we have decided upon doing.”

“ You are right, Mayneville ; really I am mad ; but another time——”

“ Oh, another time, that is a different thing ; as you please, madame.”

“ Yes, for I suspect him, as my brother does.”

“ Suspect or not, madame, he is a brave fellow, and brave men are scarce. We must confess that we are lucky ; a stranger, an unknown, falling from heaven to render us such a service.”

“ Never mind, never mind, Mayneville ; if we are obliged to abandon him at this moment, keep a watch on him, by and by, at any rate.”

“ Eh ! madame, by and by,” said Mayneville, “ we shall have no occasion I hope to watch any one.”

“ Well, really, I do not know what I am saying to-night ; you are right, Mayneville ; I am losing my senses.”

“ It is permitted to a general like you, madame, to be preoccupied on the eve of a decisive action.”

“ That is true. It is now dark, Mayneville : and the Valois returns from Vincennes when night has closed in.”

“ Oh ! we have time before us ; it is not eight o'clock, and, besides, our men are not yet arrived.”

“ They all have the word, have they not ? ”

“ All.”

“ They are trustworthy ? ”

“ Tried ones, madame.”

“ How do they arrive ? ”

“ Alone, and on foot.”

"How many do you expect?"

"Fifty; it is more than sufficient. Understand, that besides these fifty men, we have two hundred monks, who are worth as many soldiers, if they are not worth even more."

"As soon as our men have arrived, range your monks along the road."

"They are already instructed, madame; they will intercept the way, our men will drive the coach towards them; the gate of the convent will be opened, and will be closed immediately upon the coach."

"Let us sup, then, Mayneville, it will make us pass the time. I am so impatient that I would like to push the hands of the clock."

"The hour will come, be assured."

"But our men, our men?"

"They will be here on time; eight o'clock has scarcely struck, there is no time lost."

"Mayneville, Mayneville, my poor brother asks me for his surgeon; the best surgeon, the best cure for the wound of Mayenne would be a lock from the shaven Valois's hair, and the man who would carry him this present, Mayneville, would be sure to be welcome."

"In two hours, madame, this man shall set out to seek our dear duke in his retreat; he who left Paris as a fugitive shall return to it as a conqueror."

"One word more, Mayneville," said the duchess, stopping at the doorway.

"What, madame?"

"Are our friends of Paris warned?"

"What friends?"

"Our Leaguers."

"God forbid, madame. To warn a bourgeois, is to toll the bell of Notre Dame. Once the deed is done, remember that, before a soul knows anything of it, we have fifty couriers to dispatch; and then, the prisoner being safe in the cloister, we can defend ourselves against an army.

If it must be, we shall risk nothing, and we may cry from the roofs of the convent, 'The Valois is ours!'"

"Come, come, you are both prudent and skilful, Mayneville, and the Béarnais was right in calling you 'Mene-ligue.' I had some intention of doing what you have just said; but it was rather vague. Do you know that my responsibility is great, Mayneville, and that never, at any time, did a woman conceive and execute such a project?"

"I know it, madame, and therefore I counsel you, trembling with apprehension."

"Then I sum up," continued the duchess, with authority; "the monks to be armed under their robes?"

"They are so."

"The swordsmen on the road?"

"They ought to be by this time."

"The bourgeois notified after the event?"

"Three couriers will attend to that, in ten minutes, Lachapelle-Marteau, Brigard, and Bussy Le Clerc will be notified. They will inform the others."

"In the first place, kill those two great simpletons whom we saw pass at the sides of the coach; and manage it so that we may afterwards relate the event in the way most advantageous to our interests."

"Kill those poor devils?" said Mayneville: "you think it is necessary for them to die, madame?"

"Loignac! would he be a great loss?"

"He is a brave soldier."

"A mere adventurer, like that other coxcomb who pranced on the left of the coach, with his fiery eyes and swarthy skin."

"Ah! in the case of that one, I don't care so much. I do not know him; besides, I agree with you, madame, in disliking his looks."

"Then you abandon him to me," said the duchess, smiling.

"Ah! with all my heart, madame."

"Many thanks, in reality."

"*Mon Dieu !* madame, I do not dispute about it ; what I said was only for your own renown, and for the morality of the party we represent."

"Very well, very well, Mayneville ; we know that you are a virtuous man, and we will sign you a certificate to that effect if necessary. You need have nothing to do with this affair ; they will have defended the king, and will have been killed defending him. To you I recommend that young man."

"What young man ?"

"The one who has just left here ; see if he be really gone, and if it be not some spy sent us by our enemies."

"Madame," said Mayneville, "I am at your orders."

He went to the balcony, half opened the blinds, put his head out, and tried to distinguish something.

"Oh ! what a dark night," he said.

"A good, excellent night," said the duchess ; "and the darker the better ; so keep up your courage, captain."

"Yes ; but we shall see nothing, madame, and for you, especially, it is necessary to see."

"God, whose interests we defend, sees for us, Mayneville."

Mayneville, we may imagine, was less confident than Madame de Montpensier as to the intervention of Providence in affairs of this nature, and resumed his place at the window. Peering into the darkness as far as the eye could reach, he remained motionless.

"Do you see any one passing ?" said the duchess, cautiously extinguishing the light.

"No, but I hear the tramp of horses."

"Come, come ; it is they, Mayneville. All goes well."

And the duchess felt at her waist for the famous pair of scissors, which was to play so conspicuous a part in history.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW DOM MODESTE GORENFLOT BLESSED THE KING, AS HE
PASSED BEFORE THE PRIORY OF THE JACOBINS.

ERNAUTON took his leave, with a full heart but a clear conscience; he had had the singular good fortune to declare his love to a princess, and, by the important conversation which immediately succeeded, to make his declaration forgotten just enough to save his suit for the present and perhaps enable it to bear fruit in the future.

This is not all; he had been lucky enough to betray neither the king, M. de Mayenne, nor himself.

He was therefore content, but he still desired many things, and among these things a quick return to Vincennes to inform the king, and the king informed, to go to bed and dream.

Dreaming is the supreme happiness of men of action; it is the only rest they give themselves.

Ernauton set off at a full gallop as soon as he had passed the gate of Bel Esbat, but scarcely had he ridden a hundred paces, on his trusty steed whose merits had been proved so often and so well, when he found himself arrested by an obstacle, which his eyes, dazzled by the light of Bel Esbat, and not yet well accustomed to the darkness, had been unable to perceive, and could not measure.

It was simply a troop of cavaliers, who, coming from both sides of the road, surrounded him, and pointed half a dozen swords, and as many pistols and daggers at his breast.

This was a great deal for one man.

"Oh! oh!" said Ernauton, "robbers on the high-road, within a league of Paris! The devil take the country! The king has a bad provost; I shall advise him to make a change."

"Silence, if you please," said a voice which Ernauton fancied he recognized; "your sword, your arms, and quickly."

One man seized the bridle of his horse, while two others stripped him of his weapons.

"*Peste!* what clever thieves," murmured Ernauton.

And turning to those who arrested him:

"Gentlemen," he said, "you will at least do me the favor to inform me——"

"Why! it is Monsieur de Carmainges," said the principal robber, the same who had seized the young man's sword and still held it.

"Monsieur de Pincornay!" exclaimed Ernauton. "Oh, fie! fie! what a villanous trade you have taken up!"

"I said 'silence,'" repeated the voice of the chief, a few paces away, "let them bring the man to the dépôt."

"But, Monsieur de Sainte Maline," said Perducas de Pincornay, "the man whom we have arrested——"

"Well?"

"Is our companion, M. Ernauton de Carmainges?"

"Ernauton here!" exclaimed Sainte Maline, turning pale with rage; "what is he doing here?"

"Good-evening, gentlemen," calmly said Carmainges, "I did not expect, I can assure you, to find myself in such good company."

Sainte Maline remained silent.

"It seems that I am arrested," continued Ernauton; "for I do not presume that you intend to plunder me."

"The devil! the devil!" grumbled Sainte Maline; "this event was unforeseen."

"Quite as much so by me, I swear," said Carmainges, laughing.

"It is embarrassing ; well, what are you doing on the road ?"

"If I put this question to you, M. de Sainte Maline, would you answer ?"

"No."

"Then you will allow me to act as you would act."

"And you will not say what you were doing on the road ?"

Ernauton smiled, but made no reply.

"Nor where you were going ?"

The same silence.

"Then, monsieur," said Sainte Maline, "since you will not explain, I am compelled to treat you as an ordinary individual."

"Do as you please, monsieur, I simply warn you that you will answer for what you do."

"To M. de Loignac ?"

"Higher than that."

"To M. d'Epernon ?"

"Higher still."

"Well ! be it so, I have my orders, and I shall send you to Vincennes."

"To Vincennes ? capital ! it is just where I was going, monsieur."

"I am happy, monsieur," said Sainte Maline, "that this little journey so well coincides with your intentions."

Two men, armed with pistols, took immediate possession of the prisoner, whom they conducted to two other men placed about five hundred paces further on ; the two latter did the same, and in this manner Ernauton had the society of his comrades, even to the courtyard of Vincennes.

In this court, Ernauton perceived fifty disarmed horsemen, who, with pale faces and dejected looks, surrounded by a hundred and fifty light horse, coming from Nogent and Brie, deplored their ill-fortune, and expected some disastrous ending to so well-planned an enterprise.

It was the Forty-Five who, on this their first expedition, had taken all these men, some by cunning, others by main force; at one time by uniting ten against two or three, at another, graciously accosting those cavaliers from whom they expected resistance and pointing a pistol at them, when the others simply expected to meet their comrades and exchange courtesies.

The result was, that no combat had taken place, nor had a cry been uttered, and that, in an encounter of eight against twenty, one chief of the Leaguers, who had put his hand to his dagger to defend himself, and opened his mouth to cry out, had been gagged, almost smothered, and disarmed, by the Forty-Five, with the same agility with which the crew of a vessel runs a cable through the hands of a chain of men.

Such an affair would have delighted Ernauton, had he understood; but the young man saw without understanding, which made everything seem obscure to him for the next few minutes.

However, when he had observed all the prisoners with whom he was united——

“Monsieur,” he said to Sainte Maline, “I see that you were informed of the importance of my mission, and, as a gallant companion, fearing some unpleasant meeting for me, you determined to take the trouble to have me escorted. Now, I can say that you did quite right: the king is waiting for me, and I have important things to say to him. I will add even, that, as without you I should in all probability never have reached here, I shall have the honor of telling the king what you have done for the good of the service.”

Sainte Maline turned red as he had before turned pale, but he understood, being a clever man, when not blinded by passion, that Ernauton spoke the truth, and that he was expected. There was no jesting with Messieurs d’Epernon and Loignac; he therefore simply replied:

“You are free, Monsieur Ernauton; delighted at having had it in my power to be agreeable to you.”

Ernauton hastily left the ranks and mounted the steps which led to the king's room.

Sainte Maline followed him with his eyes, and half-way up the staircase he could see Loignac, who welcomed M. de Carmainges, and made a sign to him to come on.

Loignac then descended to see the captives disarmed.

Loignac verified the fact that the road was now free, owing to the arrest of the fifty men, and would remain so till the next morning, as the hour at which these fifty men were to assemble at Bel Esbat was passed.

There was, consequently, no more danger attending the king's return to Paris.

Loignac did not calculate on the convent of the Jacobins, and the artillery and musketry of the good friars. Of this, however, D'Epernon had been perfectly informed by Nicholas Poulain.

So, when Loignac went to his chief to say : " Monsieur, the roads are free ; " D'Epernon replied :

" Very well. The king's orders are, that the Forty-Five make three divisions, one in front, and one at each side of the carriage, so that if there be any firing, it may not reach the carriage."

" Very well," replied Loignac, with the impassibility of the soldier ; " but as to any firing, as I see no muskets, I anticipate no danger."

" At the Jacobins, monsieur, they must close their ranks," said D'Epernon.

This dialogue was interrupted by the movement on the staircase.

It was the king descending, and prepared to start ; he was followed by several gentlemen, among whom, Sainte Maline, with a sinking of the heart easily imagined, recognized Ernauton.

" Gentlemen," said the king, " are my brave Forty-Five assembled ? "

" Yes, sire," said D'Epernon, pointing to a group of cavaliers collected under the archway.

"Have the orders been given?"

"Yes, sire, and will be followed."

"Then let us go," said his majesty.

Loignac gave the order, "To horse!"

The call, made in a low tone, found the Forty-Five assembled; not one was missing.

The light horse were put in charge of the men belonging to Mayneville and the duchess, being forbidden under pain of death, to address them a single word.

The king got into his carriage, and placed his naked sword by his side.

M. d'Epernon swore "*Parfandious!*" and gallantly tried if his own would move freely in the scabbard.

Nine o'clock sounded from the donjon; they started.

About an hour after the departure of Ernauton, M. de Mayneville was still at the window, whence we have seen him endeavoring, but in vain, to follow the young man's course in the darkness; but this hour having elapsed, he was far less tranquil, and a little more inclined to believe in the assistance of Providence, for he began to suspect that that of man had failed him.

Not one of his soldiers had appeared, and the only sound heard along the black and silent road, was the occasional tramp of horses' hoofs hastening to Vincennes.

At this noise, M. de Mayneville and the duchess attempted to peer into the obscurity, to recognize their men, and guess something of what was passing, or ascertain the cause of their delay.

But, these sounds extinguished, all was again silent.

This perpetual going and coming, which gave no result, had finally inspired Mayneville with such uneasiness that he had made one of the duchess's men mount a horse, with orders to get information from the first troop of cavaliers he might meet.

The messenger had not returned.

Seeing this, the impatient duchess sent a second, who likewise had not returned.

"Our officer," said the duchess, still disposed to look on the bright side of things, "our officer is afraid of not having sufficient force, and keeps as a reinforcement those we have sent him ; it is prudent, but it makes me anxious."

"Yes, very anxious," replied Mayneville, whose eyes never left the dark and gloomy horizon.

"Mayneville, what can have happened?"

"I will get on horseback myself, and we shall know, Madame." Mayneville made a movement to go.

"I forbid you!" exclaimed the duchess, restraining him; "Mayneville, who would stay with me? Who will know our officers—our friends, when the time comes? No, no! remain, Mayneville. One is naturally apprehensive when a secret of this importance is concerned ; but, in reality, the plan was too well arranged, and above all kept too secret, not to succeed."

"Nine o'clock," said Mayneville, replying to his own impatience, rather than to the duchess. "Ah! there are the Jacobins, who are leaving their convent, and ranging themselves along the walls ; perhaps they have some private information."

"Silence!" exclaimed the duchess, stretching her hand towards the horizon.

"What?"

"Silence, listen!"

They heard, at a distance, a rolling like that of thunder.

"It is cavalry," exclaimed the duchess ; "they bring him to us, they bring him to us!"

And, in accordance with her hasty character, passing from the most cruel apprehension to the maddest joy, she clapped her hands, crying, "I have him! I have him!"

Mayneville was still listening.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I hear the rumbling of a coach and the gallop of horses."

And he commanded aloud :

"Outside the walls, brothers. outside the walls."

Immediately, the gates of the priory opened quickly, and a hundred armed monks marched out in good order, headed by Borromée.

They took up a position across the road. The voice of Gorenflot was then heard, saying :

"Wait for me! wait for me! it is important that I should be at the head of the chapter to receive his majesty worthily."

"To the balcony, lord prior! to the balcony!" exclaimed Borromée; "you know that you ought to overlook all."

"True," said Gorenflot, "true; I had forgotten that I had chosen this post: happily you are there to remind me of it, Brother Borromée."

Borromée gave an order in a low tone, and four brothers, under the pretense of doing him honor and ceremony, flanked the worthy prior to the balcony.

Presently the road, which made a turn at a short distance from the priory, was illuminated by a quantity of torches, thanks to which, the duchess and Mayneville could see the cuirasses shine, and the swords sparkle.

Incapable of moderation, she cried :

"Go down, Mayneville, and you shall bring him to me bound and escorted by guards."

"Yes, yes, madame," said the gentleman, preoccupied ; "but one thing disturbs me."

"Which?"

"I do not hear the signal agreed upon."

"What use is the signal, since they have him?"

"But they were to arrest him here, opposite the priory, it seems to me," insisted Mayneville.

"They found a better opportunity further down."

"I do not see our officer."

"But I see him."

"Where?"

"That red feather."

"*Ventre bleu!* madame!"

"What?"

"That red plume!"

"Well?"

"Is M. d'Epernon!—M. d'Epernon, sword in hand!"

"Who has left him his sword?"

"By heaven! he commands."

"Our men! There has been treason, then!"

"Eh! madame, they are not our men."

"You are mad, Mayneville."

At this moment Loignac, at the head of the first body of the Forty-Five, brandished a large sword, and shouted, "Long live the king."

"Long live the king!" responded the Forty-Five with their formidable Gascon accent.

The duchess turned pale and fell on the ledge of the window, almost fainting.

Mayneville, gloomy and resolute, seized his sword. He was not certain that the men would not invade his house, as they passed.

The cortège still advanced, like a torrent of noise and light. It had reached Bel Esbat; it reached the priory.

Borromée advanced three steps. Loignac pushed his horse straight to the monk, who seemed, under his woollen robe to challenge him.

But Borromée, a man of quick perception, saw that all was lost, and at once decided on his course.

"Make room!" cried Loignac, roughly, "make room for the king."

Borromée, who had drawn his sword under his robe, replaced it in its scabbard.

Gorenflot, excited by the cries and the noise of arms, dazzled by the blazing of the torches, extended his powerful right hand, and the fore and middle fingers extended, blessed the king from the height of his balcony.

Henry leaned towards the door, saw him, and bowed to him, smilingly.

This smile, an authentic proof of the favor which the

worthy prior of the Jacobins enjoyed at court, electrified Gorenflot, who gave out, in turn, a "Vive le roi!" in a stentorian voice capable of raising the arches of a cathedral.

But the rest of the convent remained silent. In fact, they expected quite another dénouement to these two months of training, and the armed enterprise which had followed.

But Borromée, old trooper that he was, had by a glance calculated the number of the king's defenders, and recognized their warlike appearance. The absence of the duchess's partisans revealed to him the fatal issue of the enterprise; he knew that to hesitate a minute was to ruin everything.

He did not hesitate, and just as the horse's breast brushed against him, he cried, "Vive le roi!" with a voice almost as sonorous as that of Gorenflot.

The whole of the convent then cried out, "Vive le roi!" brandishing their weapons.

"Thanks, reverend fathers, thanks!" cried the shrill voice of Henry the Third.

He then passed before the convent, which was to be the end of his course, like a whirlwind of fire, noise, and glory, leaving Bel Esbat in the obscurity.

From her balcony, concealed by the gilded escutcheon, behind which she had fallen on her knees, the duchess saw, examined, devoured each countenance, on which the torches threw their flaming light.

"Ah!" she said, with an exclamation, pointing out one of the cavaliers of the escort, "look! look! Mayneville!"

"The young man, M. de Mayenne's messenger, is in the king's service!" exclaimed the latter.

"We are lost!" murmured the duchess.

"We must fly immediately, madame," said Mayneville; "the Valois is conqueror to-day, and to-morrow he may abuse his victory."

"We have been betrayed!" exclaimed the duchess; "this young man has betrayed us. He knew all."

The king was already at a distance; he had disappeared with the whole of his escort, through the Porte Saint Antoine, which opened before him, and then closed behind him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW CHICOT BLESSED KING LOUIS THE ELEVENTH, FOR HAVING INVENTED THE POST, AND RESOLVES TO PROFIT BY THIS INVENTION.

CHICOT, to whom our readers will permit us to return, after the important discovery he had made when he untied the cords of M. de Mayenne's mask, had not a moment to lose. He hastened as quickly as possible, beyond all sound of the adventure.

He well understood that between the duke and himself, the combat would be a deadly one. Wounded in the flesh, and still more grievously in his pride, Mayenne, who, to the former blows of the scabbard, now added the recent sword-thrust, would never forgive him.

"Well! well!" exclaimed the brave Gascon, hastening on towards Beaugency, "now or never is the occasion to spend upon post-horses the joint contributions of those three illustrious personages, whom they call Henri de Valois, Dom Modeste Gorenflot, and Sebastien Chicot."

Skilful as he was in mimicking, not only every sentiment, but also every condition, Chicot instantly assumed the manners of a grand seigneur, as he had, in less precarious circumstances, assumed the manners of a bourgeois. And never was prince served with greater zeal than Maître Chicot, when he had sold Ernauton's horse, and conversed for a quarter of an hour with the post-master.

Chicot, once in the saddle, had resolved not to stop until he considered himself in a place of safety ; he galloped, therefore, as fast as the horses of thirty relays would kindly permit him. As for himself, he seemed made of iron, and at the end of sixty leagues, accomplished in twenty hours, he felt no fatigue.

When, thanks to this rapidity, he had, in three days, reached Bordeaux, Chicot fancied he might allow himself to take a little breath.

A man can think while he gallops, it is about all he can do ; Chicot, then, thought.

His embassy, which increased in importance as he advanced toward the term of his journey, appeared to him in very different colors, without our being able to say precisely, under what color it did appear.

What kind of prince was he about to find in this strange Henri, whom some thought a fool, others a coward, and all, a despicable renegade ?

But Chicot's opinion was not that of the rest of the world. Since his return to Navarre, Henry's character, like the chameleon's skin, which reflects the color of the object upon which it rests,—Henry's character, on touching his native soil, had received some new shades.

Henry had, indeed, known how to place sufficient space between the royal claw and his precious skin, which he had so skilfully saved from all rents.

His outward policy, however, was always the same ; he was smothered in the general hubbub, and smothered with him, and around him, some illustrious names, which the French world was astonished to see reflecting their lustre on a pale crown of Navarre. As in Paris, he paid assiduous court to his wife, whose influence, at two hundred leagues from Paris, seemed, however, to have become useless. In short, he vegetated, happy to be alive.

For the mass, he was a subject for hyperbolical mockery.

For Chicot, he was matter for deep meditation.

Chicot, little as it appeared, had a natural talent for guessing, in others, the secret concealed under the outer covering. Henry of Navarre, to Chicot, was an enigma, though an unsolved one.

To know that Henry of Navarre was an enigma, and not a pure and simple fact, was to have found out a great deal. Chicot, therefore, knew more than all the rest, in knowing, like the old sage of Greece, that he knew nothing at all.

There, where most people would have gone to speak freely, and with their hearts laid bare, Chicot felt that he must proceed cautiously and with carefully guarded words.

This necessity of dissimulation was impressed on his mind, first, by his natural penetration ; and afterwards by the aspect of the places through which he journeyed.

Once within the limits of the little principality of Navarre, a country whose poverty was proverbial in France, Chicot, to his great astonishment, ceased to observe on every countenance, in every house, in each stone, the stamp of that hideous misery which preyed on the finest provinces of that France he had just left.

The woodcutter who passed, his arm resting on the yoke of his favorite ox ; the damsel, with the short petticoat and nimble step, who carried water on her head, after the fashion of the ancient choephores, the old man humming some song of his youth, and shaking his venerable white head, the tame bird that chattered in his cage, whilst pecking at its well-filled crib, the swarthy infant, with its thin but nervous limbs, all spoke to Chicot, a living, clear, and intelligible language ; all cried out to him, at every step he took : " See ! we are happy here."

At times, at the sound of wheels creaking in the hollow roads, Chicot felt a sudden terror. He remembered the heavy artillery which broke up the roads of France. But at the turn of the road, the wagon of the vintager came in sight, loaded with well-filled casks and rosy chil-

dren. When, at a distance, he caught sight of the barrel of an arquebuse, behind a hedge of figs or vines, Chicot thought of the three ambushes from which he had so luckily escaped. It turned out to be only a sportsman, followed by his large dogs, as he crossed the plain abounding in hares, to reach the mountain equally full of red partridge and woodcock.

Although the season was advanced, and Chicot had left Paris filled with fog and hoar frost, the weather was fine, and even warm. The majestic trees had not yet lost their leaves, which, in the south, they never entirely lose,—the majestic trees shed, from the tops of their reddening domes, a blue shadow over the grayish ground. The horizons, sharp, clear, and cloudless, variegated with villages, and their white houses were mirrored in the rays of the sun.

The Béarnais peasant, with his cap saucily inclined over one ear, spurred over the plains his little horses, who bounded, without fatigue, on their iron legs; they go twenty leagues at a stretch, and, never combed, never dressed, shake themselves at their journey's end, and go to graze on the first tuft of broom or heath,—their only, but sufficing repast.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, "I have never seen Gascony so rich! the Béarnais lives like a fighting-cock.

"Since he is so happy, there is every reason to believe, as says his brother the King of France, that he is good; but he will not acknowledge it perhaps. In truth, though translated into Latin, the letter still annoys me; I have almost a mind to re-translate it into Greek.

"But, bah! I have never heard it said that Henriot, as his brother, Charles the Ninth, called him, knew Latin. I will make him a French translation from my Latin one; *expurgata*, as they say at the Sorbonne."

And Chicot, while making these reflections to himself, obtained information as to the present whereabouts of the king.

The king was at Nerac. He was at first supposed to be at Pau, which had induced our messenger to push on to Mont-de-Marsan; but on reaching there, the topography of the court had been rectified, and Chicot turned to the left, to gain the road to Nerac, which he found full of people returning from the market at Condom.

They informed him—Chicot, we may remember, was very circumspect in replying to the questions of others, but asked a great many himself—they informed him, we say, that the King of Navarre led a very happy life; and that he allowed himself no rest in his perpetual transitions from one love to another.

Chicot made on the road the acquaintance of a young Catholic priest, a sheep merchant, and an officer, who kept him good company from Mont-de-Marsan; they discoursed together with much feasting wherever they stopped.

These people appeared to him, by this very chance association, to represent Navarre,—learned, commercial and military. The priest recited to him the sonnets that were made on the loves of the king and the beautiful Fosseuse, daughter of René Montmorency, Baron de Fosseux.

“Come, come,” said Chicot, “we must understand each other; they believe in Paris that his majesty the King of Navarre is mad about Mademoiselle de Rebours.”

“Oh!” said the officer, “that was at Pau.”

“Yes, yes,” added the priest, “that was at Pau.”

“Ah! that was at Pau,” said the merchant, who, as a plain bourgeois, seemed the least informed of the three.

“What!” said Chicot, “has the king a mistress in every town?”

“Why, that may well be,” replied the officer, “for to my knowledge he was the lover of Mademoiselle Dayelle when I was in garrison at Castelnauudary.”

“Stop, stop,” said Chicot, “Mademoiselle Dayelle, a Greek?”

"Yes," said the priest, "a Cypriote."

"Pardon me," said the merchant, delighted at having his word, "but I am from Agen!"

"Well?"

"Well! I can answer for it that the king knew Mademoiselle de Tignouville at Agen!"

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, "what a gay Lothario! But to return to Mademoiselle Dayelle, whose family I knew?"

"Mademoiselle was jealous, and was always threatening; she had a pretty little curved poniard, which she kept on her work-table, and one day the king left, carrying away the poniard, saying that he wished no accident to happen to the one who might succeed him."

"So that to this day his majesty is entirely devoted to Mademoiselle de Rebours?" inquired Chicot.

"On the contrary, on the contrary," said the priest, "they have quarrelled; Mademoiselle de Rebours was the daughter of the president, and, as such, a little too strong in her law proceedings. She pleaded so much against the queen, thanks to the insinuations of the queen-mother, that the poor girl became ill from it. Queen Marguerite, then, who is no fool, reserved her advantages, and prevailed on the king to quit Pau for Nerac, in consequence of which the love was nipped in its bud."

"Then the passion of the king is for La Fosseuse?" said Chicot.

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* yes, the more so because she is *enceinte*; it is frenzy."

"But what says the queen?" inquired Chicot.

"The queen?" repeated the officer.

"Yes, the queen."

"The queen lays her griefs at the foot of the cross," said the priest.

"Besides," added the officer, "the queen is ignorant of these affairs."

"Why!" said Chicot; "that is not possible."

"Why so?" said the officer.

"Because Nerac is not so large a town, that it is easy to hide things there."

"Oh! as to that, monsieur," said the officer, "there is a park there, and, in this park, avenues more than three thousand feet long, bordered by cypresses, plane-trees, and magnificent sycamores; it is a shady grove, in which you cannot see ten paces in full day; only think what it must be at night."

"Then, the queen is very much occupied, monsieur," said the priest.

"Bah! occupied?"

"Yes."

"And with what, if you please?"

"With God, monsieur," replied the priest, proudly.

"With God?" exclaimed Chicot.

"Why not?"

"Ah! the queen is religious?"

"Very religious."

"Nevertheless, there is no mass at the palace, I imagine," said Chicot.

"And you imagine very wrong, monsieur; no mass! do you take us for heathens, then? Know, monsieur, that if the king goes to church with his gentlemen, the queen has mass in a private chapel."

"The queen?"

"Yes, yes."

"Queen Marguerite?"

"Queen Marguerite, as a proof of which, I, an unworthy priest, have received two crowns for having officiated in this chapel: I even preached a very good sermon there on the text: 'God has separated the chaff from the wheat.' It is in the gospel, God will separate, but, as it is a very long time since the gospel was written, I supposed that the thing was done."

"And the king knew of this sermon?" said Chicot.

"He heard it."

"Without being angry?"

"Quite the contrary, he greatly applauded it."

"You astound me," said Chicot.

"It must be added," said the officer, "that they do something else besides hearing mass or sermons; there are good dinners at the château, without counting the promenades, and I think that nowhere in France there are more mustaches shown than in the walks at Nerac."

Chicot had obtained more information than he required, to enable him to form a plan. He knew Marguerite, from having seen her in Paris, holding her court, and he knew, besides, that if she was blind in affairs of love, it was because she had some motive for placing a bandage over her eyes.

"*Ventre de biche!*" he said; "these alleys of cypress, and three thousand paces of shade run disagreeably in my head. I am coming from Paris to tell the truth at Nerac, to men who have walks three thousand paces long and such deep shade, that the women cannot see their husbands walking with their mistresses. *Corbleu!* they will be ready to kill me just to teach me how to interfere in so many charming promenades. Luckily, I know the king to be a philosopher, and I trust in that; besides, I am ambassador, and my head is sacred. Come!"

And Chicot continued his journey.

He entered Nerac towards evening, just at the hour of the promenades, which so greatly preoccupied the King of France and his ambassador.

Besides, Chicot could satisfy himself as to the simplicity of the royal manners, by the ease with which he obtained an audience.

A plain footman opened to him the doors of a rustic salon, bordered with variegated flowers. Above this were the antechamber of the king, and the chamber he loved to occupy during the day, to give those unimportant audiences of which he was so prodigal.

An officer, or a page, went to inform him when a visitor

presented himself. This officer, or page, ran after the king until he found him, wherever he might be. The king came upon this simple invitation, and received the visitor.

Chicot was deeply struck by this gracious facility: he judged the king good, candid, and very much in love.

This opinion became even stronger, when, from the extremity of a walk (not of three thousand paces, but of twelve or fifteen, at the extremity of a winding alley, bordered with laurels in bloom), he saw the king coming with an old hat on his head, dressed in a dark green doublet, and gray boots, out of breath, carrying a cup and ball in his hand.

Henry had a smooth brow, as if care never dared touch it with its wing, a merry mouth, and eyes sparkling with health.

As he came up, he tore off, with his left hand, the flowers from the border.

"Who wishes to see me?" he asked of his page.

"Sire," replied the latter, "a man, who appears to me half lord, half soldier." Chicot heard these last words, and advanced timidly.

"It is I, sire," he said.

"Good!" exclaimed the king, raising his two hands to heaven; "Monsieur Chicot in Navarre! Monsieur Chicot in our house! *Ventre Saint Gris!* welcome, dear Monsieur Chicot."

"A thousand thanks, sire."

"In good health, thank God!"

"I hope so at least, dear sire," said Chicot, transported with happiness.

"Ah! *parbleu!*" said Henry, "we will drink together a bottle of Limoux, on which you shall give me your opinion. Really you make me quite happy, Monsieur Chicot; sit down there."

And he pointed to a grassy bank.

"Never, sire," said Chicot, refusing.

"Have you ridden two hundred leagues to come and

see me, then, and shall I let you stand? No, Monsieur Chicot, sit down, sit down. One cannot talk standing."

"But, sire, respect."

"Respect here in Navarre? you are mad, my dear Chicot; and who, then, thinks of such a thing?"

"No, sire, I am not mad," replied Chicot; "I am an ambassador."

A slight frown contracted the king's brow, but it disappeared so rapidly, that Chicot, observer though he was, did not even notice the trace.

"Ambassador!" said Henry, with a surprise which he attempted to render innocent; "ambassador from whom?"

"Ambassador from King Henry the Third; I come from Paris and from the Louvre, sire."

"Ah! that is a different case," said the king, rising from his turf bank with a sigh; "retire, page, leave us. Carry wine upstairs to my chamber,—no, to my cabinet. Come with me, Chicot, I will conduct you."

Chicot followed Henry of Navarre. Henry walked quicker now than in coming up through his alley of laurels.

"What misery," thought Chicot, "to come and trouble this honest man, in his peace and ignorance. Bah! he will be philosophical."

CHAPTER XLV.

HOW THE KING OF NAVARRE GUESSED THAT "TURENNIUS" MEANT TURENNE, AND "MARGOTA" MARGUERITE.

THE cabinet of the King of Navarre was not very sumptuous, as we may presume. His Béarnese majesty was not rich, and did not waste the little he had. This cabinet occupied, with the bedroom, the whole right wing of the château. There was a corridor between the antechamber, or guard-room, and the sleeping-room; this corridor led to the cabinet.

This apartment was large and well, though not royally, furnished, and from its windows could be seen the magnificent meadows bordering on the river.

Large willow and plane trees hid the course of the river, without preventing the eyes from being sometimes dazzled, when the stream, issuing, like a mythological god, from its foliage, made the midday sun glitter in its golden scales, or the midnight luminary shine on its draperies of silver.

The windows looked on one side upon this magical panorama, terminated in the distance by a chain of hills somewhat burned in the noonday sun, but which, at night, bounded the horizon with their violet tints of admirable purity; and on the other side was the courtyard of the château. Thus lighted on the east and west by the double row of windows, corresponding one with the other, red here, blue there, the hall had a magnificent appearance, when it reflected the first rays of the sun, or the pearly azure of the rising moon.

These natural beauties obtained less attention from

Chicot, it must be confessed, than the arrangement of the room, the usual residence of Henry. In each piece of furniture, the intelligent ambassador seemed to search for a letter, and this with much more attention, that the collection of these letters would give him the answer to the enigma he had so long been guessing, more particularly still, during his journey.

The king seated himself, with his usual good-nature and his eternal smile, in a great arm-chair of leather, with gilt nails, but woolen fringe. Chicot, to obey him, rolled opposite to him a folding-chair, or rather a stool, covered with the same stuff, and enriched with similar ornaments.

Henry looked at Chicot earnestly and smilingly, but at the same time with an attention which a courtier would have found fatiguing.

"You will find that I am very curious, dear Monsieur Chicot," began the king; "but I cannot help it. I have so long looked upon you as dead, that, despite the joy your resurrection causes me, I can hardly bring myself to grasp the idea that you are living. Why, then, did you disappear so suddenly from this world?"

"Eh! sire," said Chicot, with his usual freedom, "you also disappeared from Vincennes; each one suffers an eclipse according to his means, and especially his needs."

"You have always had more wit than any one, dear Monsieur Chicot," said Henry, "and that convinces me I am not speaking to a ghost."

Then assuming a serious air,

"But come," he added, "we shall lay aside wit, and talk business."

"If it does not fatigue your majesty, I am at your majesty's orders."

The king's eye sparkled.

"Fatigue me!" he repeated; and in another tone, "it is true that I grow rusty here," he added, calmly, "but I am not fatigued for I have done nothing; to-day Henry

of Navarre has been here and there, and exercised his body, but the king has not yet set his mind to work."

"Sire, I am very glad of it," replied Chicot; "as the ambassador of a king, your relative and your friend, I have some very delicate commissions to execute with your majesty."

"Speak quickly, then, for you excite my curiosity."

"Sire——"

"Your letters of credit, first. I know it is a needless formality, since it relates to you; but still, I wish to show you that, a Béarnese peasant though we are, we know our duty as a king."

"Sire, I ask your majesty's pardon," replied Chicot; "but all that I had of letters of credit I drowned in the river, threw into the fire, scattered in the air."

"And why so, dear Monsieur Chicot?"

"Because we do not travel when we repair to Navarre, as ambassador, as we travel to purchase cloth at Lyons; and if we have the dangerous honor of carrying royal letters, we only run the risk of carrying them to the grave."

"It is true," said Henry, with perfect good-nature; "the roads are not safe, and, in Navarre, we are reduced, for want of money, to trust ourselves to the honesty of the people; but there are not many thieves among them."

"What!" exclaimed Chicot; "why, they are lambs, they are little angels, sire, but in Navarre only."

"Ah! ah!" said Henry.

"Yes; but out of Navarre, we meet wolves and vultures round every prey. I was a prey, sire, so I had my vultures and my wolves."

"However, I am happy to see that they did not quite eat you up."

"*Ventre de biche!* sire, it was not their fault: they did all they could but they found me too tough, and could not get through my skin. But, sire, let us leave, if you please, the details of my journey, which are idle matters, and return to our letter of credit."

"But since you have none, my dear Monsieur Chicot," said Henry, "it seems to me of no use to return to it."

"That is, I have none now, but I had one."

"Ah! well, then, give it to me, Monsieur Chicot."

And Henry extended his hand.

"Here is the misfortune, sire," resumed Chicot. "I had a letter, as I have had the honor of informing your majesty, and few men have had a better one."

"You lost it?"

"I hastened to destroy it, sire, for M. de Mayenne ran after me to steal it from me."

"Cousin Mayenne?"

"In person."

"Luckily he does not run very fast. Is he still getting fatter?"

"*Ventre de biche!* not at this moment, I suppose."

"And why so?"

"Because, you understand, sire, he had the misfortune to catch me, and in the encounter, received a very neat sword-wound."

"And the letter?"

"Not a shadow of it, thanks to the precautions I had taken."

"Bravo! you were wrong in not being willing to describe your journey to me, Monsieur Chicot; tell me the details; they interest me greatly."

"Your majesty is very good."

"But one thing disturbs me."

"Which?"

"If the letter is destroyed for M. de Mayenne, it is also destroyed for me. How, then, shall I know what my brother Henry writes me, since his letter is not in existence?"

"Pardon, sire, it exists in my memory."

"How so?"

"Previous to tearing it in pieces, I learned it by heart."

"An excellent idea, Monsieur Chicot, excellent, and in

which I recognize the wit of a countryman. You will recite it to me, eh?"

"Willingly, sire."

"Such as it was, without the slightest change?"

"Without changing the sense."

"How do you say?"

"I say that I will recite it to you faithfully; although I am ignorant of the language, I have a good memory."

"What language?"

"The Latin language."

"I do not understand you," said Henry, turning his clear eyes on Chicot, "you speak of the Latin language, of a letter——"

"Without doubt."

"Explain yourself; was my brother's letter written in Latin?"

"Yes, sire."

"Why in Latin?"

"Ah! sire, no doubt, because the Latin is a bold language, a tongue that may say all things, the language in which Persius and Juvenal immortalized the follies and errors of kings."

"Of kings?"

"And of queens, sire,"

The king began to frown.

"I mean of emperors and empresses," corrected Chicot.

"You know Latin, Monsieur Chicot?" said Henry, coldly.

"Yes and no, sire."

"You are very lucky if it is yes, for you have an immense advantage over me, who do not know it, so that I have never been able to attend seriously to the mass, on account of that devilish Latin. So you know it, then?"

"I was taught to read it, sire, as well as Greek and Hebrew."

"That is very useful, Monsieur Chicot, you are a living book."

"Your majesty has just found the word, a living book. They print a few pages in my memory, they send me where they like. I arrive, I am read and understood."

"Or not understood."

"How so, sire?"

"Why, if one be ignorant of the language in which you are printed."

"Ah! sire, kings know everything."

"That is what they tell the people, Monsieur Chicot, and what flatterers tell kings."

"Then, sire, it is useless for me to recite to your majesty this letter, which I had learned by heart, since neither one nor the other of us will understand anything of it."

"Is there not a great analogy between Latin and Italian?"

"They say so, sire."

"And Spanish?"

"Very great, I am told."

"Then, make an attempt; I know a little Italian, my Gascon patois is something like Spanish; perhaps I shall understand Latin without having ever learned it."

Chicot bowed.

"Your majesty orders me to recite it."

"That is, I request you, dear Monsieur Chicot."

Chicot began with the following phrase, which he prefaced with all sorts of introductions:

"*Frater Carrissime:—Sincerus amor quo te prosequatur germanus noster Carolus nonus, functus nuper, colet usque regiùm nostram et pectori meo pertinaciter adheret.*"

Henry did not change a muscle of his countenance, but at the last word he stopped Chicot by a sign.

"If I am not mistaken," he said, "in this sentence they speak of love, obstinacy and of my brother, Charles the Ninth."

"I do not deny it, sire," said Chicot, "Latin is so beautiful a language, that one sentence might contain all this."

"Continue," said the king.

Chicot continued.

The Béarnais listened with the same coolness to all the passages in which there was any mention of his wife and the Vicomte de Turenne; but at the last name:

"Does not *Turennius* mean Turenne?" he said.

"I think it does, sire."

"And *Margota*, must be the little pet name, which my brother, Charles the Ninth and Henry the Third, gave my beloved wife Marguerite, their sister!"

"I see nothing impossible in it," replied Chicot, and he pursued his recitation to the end of the last sentence, without the king's features once changing their expression.

At length he stopped at the peroration, the style of which he had caressed with such sonorous emphasis, that we might have supposed it a paragraph from one of the Verrines, or a discourse for the poet Archias.

"Is it finished?" inquired Henry.

"Yes, sire."

"Well! it is superb."

"Is it not, sire?"

"What a pity that I understand but two words of it—*Turennius* and *Margota*. And again——"

"An irreparable misfortune, sire, unless your majesty decides upon having the letter translated by some one."

"Oh! no!" said Henry, quickly, "and you, Monsieur Chicot, who have shown so much discretion in your embassy, in destroying the original autograph, you would not advise me to make this letter public?"

"I do not say that, sire."

"But you think so?"

"I think, since your majesty questions me, that the letter which the king, your brother, recommended to me with so much care, and despatched to your majesty by a private messenger, may contain, here and there, some good thing from which your majesty might derive some advantage."

"Yes, but to confide these good things to some one, I must have full confidence in this person."

"Certainly."

"Well! do one thing," said Henry, as if enlightened by an idea.

"Which?"

"Go and find my wife Margota, she is learned; recite this letter to her, and, to a certainty, she will understand it; and very naturally she will explain it to me."

"Ah! this is admirable!" exclaimed Chicot, "and your majesty is wisdom itself."

"Am I not?—Go!"

"I run, sire."

"Mind you do not alter a word of the letter."

"It would be impossible to do that; I must know Latin, and I do not know it; some barbarism at the most."

"Go, go! my friend; go!"

Chicot received directions as to where he might find Madame Marguerite, and went away more convinced than ever that the king was an enigma.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE ALLEY OF THREE THOUSAND PACES.

THE queen inhabited the other wing of the château, divided in nearly the same fashion as the one Chicot had left.

From that side usually came sounds of music and some plume was to be seen around.

The famous alley of three thousand paces, which had been so talked about, began at the very windows of Marguerite's wing, and her eyes rested on none but agreeable objects, such as flowers, green bowers, etc.

One would have said that the poor queen endeavored to drive away, by the sight of these cheerful objects, many a gloomy idea that dwelt among her thoughts.

A poet (Marguerite, in the province, as in Paris, was always the star of poets), a poet had composed a sonnet about her.

"She wished," he said, "by guarding her heart, to chase away all painful memories."

Born on the steps of the throne, daughter, wife, and sister of a king, though she was, Marguerite had, in fact, deeply suffered. Her philosophy, more boastful than that of the King of Navarre, was less solid, because it was only artificial and due to study, while that of the king was natural.

Therefore, Marguerite, philosopher though she was, or rather wished to be, had already allowed time and grief to stamp their lines on her features.

She was, nevertheless, still remarkably beautiful; a beauty of expression particularly, which is less striking among individuals of a lower rank, but which pleases most the illustrious, to whom we are always ready to yield the supremacy of physical beauty.

Marguerite had a sweet yet joyous smile, a brilliant yet soft eye, a supple and graceful carriage. Marguerite, we have said, was still an adorable creature.

As a woman, she walked like a princess; as a queen, she had the step of a charming woman.

She was therefore idolized at Nerac, whither she imported elegance, life, and joy. She, a Parisian princess, had patiently resigned herself to a provincial residence, and this alone was a virtue in the eyes of the inhabitants.

Her court was not simply a court of gentlemen and ladies, the whole people loved her both as a woman and as a queen; and truly, the harmony of her flutes and violins, like the odors and leavings of her feasts, were open to every one.

She knew how to employ her time so that each of her

days was of some profit to her, and none of them were lost for those who surrounded her.

Filled with hatred for her enemies, but patient, that she might the better avenge herself; feeling instinctively that under the mask of indifference and forbearance Henry of Navarre cherished an ill-feeling toward her, and had a full knowledge of all her misdeeds: without relatives, without friends, Marguerite had accustomed herself to live with love, or, at least, with the semblance of love, and to replace with poetry and comfort, family, husband, friends, and the rest.

None but Catharine de Medicis, none but Chicot, none but a few melancholy spirits, returned from the realms of death, could have explained why Marguerite's cheeks were already so pale—why her eyes were so often filled with sadness, why her poor heart showed its void even in her expressive glance.

Marguerite had no more confidants; the poor queen had wearied of them, since the others, for the sake of gold, had betrayed her confidence and her honor.

She therefore went alone, and this, perhaps, doubled in the eyes of the Navarrese, without their even suspecting it, the majesty of this attitude, more remarkable by its isolation.

Moreover, the belief that Henry cherished an ill-feeling towards her was instinctive, and came rather from the consciousness of her own misdeeds than from his behavior. Henry treated her as a daughter of France; he never spoke of her but with respectful politeness, or gracious ease; on all occasions, and in all matters, his manners towards her were those of a husband and a friend.

Thus, the court of Nerac, like all other courts living in friendly intercourse, overflowed in physical and moral harmonies.

Such were the studies and reflections made by Chicot, the greatest observer, and most methodical of men, upon appearances as yet very slight.

Following Henry's instructions, he had first gone to the palace, but he had found no one there. He had been told that Marguerite was at the end of the beautiful alley parallel with the river; and he repaired to the famous alley through the laurel walk.

When he had gone about two-thirds of its length, he saw, at the other extremity, under a bower of Spanish jasmine, broom, and clematis, a gay group covered with ribbons, feathers, velvet, and swords. Perhaps all this finery was not in the best taste, and was a little old-fashioned, but for Nerac it was brilliant, even dazzling. Chicot, who had come straight from Paris, was satisfied with the *coup d'œil*.

As a page of the king preceded Chicot, the queen, whose eyes wandered here and there with the continual restlessness of melancholy hearts, recognized the colors of Navarre and called him.

"What do you want, D'Aubiac?" she inquired.

The young man, we might call him a child, for he had scarcely reached the age of twelve, blushed and bent his knee before Marguerite.

"Madame," he said, in French, for the queen insisted on the use of the patois being forbidden on every occasion of service, and every matter of business, "a gentleman from Paris, sent from the Louvre to his majesty the King of Navarre, and by the King of Navarre to you, desires to speak to your majesty."

A sudden flush passed over Marguerite's handsome face; she turned round quickly, and with that painful sensation which upon every occasion penetrates a wounded heart.

Chicot was standing motionless, at twenty paces from her.

Her sharp eyes recognized, by the carriage and side face, for the Gascon stood between her and the orange-colored sky, a figure she knew; she left the circle, instead of commanding the new-comer to approach.

On turning again to bid farewell to the company, she

made a sign, with the tips of her fingers, to one of the most richly dressed and handsome of the gentlemen.

The farewell for all, was, in reality, a farewell to a single one.

But as the favored cavalier did not appear quite at his ease, despite this salutation, the object of which was to reassure him, and as a woman's eye sees everything,

"Monsieur de Turenne," said Marguerite, "will you be kind enough to tell these ladies that I shall return in a moment?"

The handsome gentleman, in the white and blue doublet, bowed with more alacrity than an indifferent courtier would have shown.

The queen advanced with a quick step towards Chicot, who, without moving an inch, had observed the whole of this scene, so well in harmony with the phrases of the letter he carried.

"Monsieur Chicot!" exclaimed Marguerite in astonishment as she approached the Gascon.

"Here I am at your majesty's feet," replied Chicot, "and find you ever gracious and beautiful, queen here as at the Louvre."

"It is a miracle to see you at such a distance from Paris, monsieur."

"Pardon me, madame, for it is not poor Chicot who had the idea of performing this miracle."

"I believe so; they said you were dead."

"I pretended to be so."

"What do they want with us, Monsieur Chicot? am I to think that the Queen of Navarre has the good fortune of being still remembered in France?"

"Oh! madame," said Chicot, smiling, "be assured that with us, queens are not forgotten, when they are of your age, and possess your beauty."

"They are still gallant at Paris, then?"

"The King of France," added Chicot, without replying

to the last question, "even writes to the King of Navarre on this subject."

Marguerite blushed.

"He writes?" she said.

"Yes, madame."

"And it is you who brought the letter?"

"Brought! no, for reasons which the King of Navarre will explain to you; but learned by heart, and repeated from memory."

"I understand: this letter was important, and you feared it would be lost, or stolen from you?"

"That is the truth, madame; now, your majesty will excuse me; the letter was written in Latin."

"Ah! very well!" exclaimed the queen, "you know that I understand Latin."

"And the King of Navarre, madame," said Chicot, "does he know it?"

"Dear Monsieur Chicot," replied Marguerite, "it is very difficult to know what the King of Navarre understands, or does not understand."

"Ah, ah!" said Chicot, glad to see that he was not the only one guessing at the solution of the enigma.

"If we are to believe appearances," continued Marguerite, "he knows but little of it, for he never understands, or at least appears to understand, when I speak in this language to any one at court."

Chicot bit his lips.

"Ah! the devil!" he said.

"Have you recited this letter to him?" said Marguerite.

"It was to him the letter was addressed."

"And did he appear to understand it?"

"Only two words of it."

"Which were they?"

"*Turennius et Margota.*"

"*Turennius et Margota?*"

"Yes; these two words were in the letter."

"Then what did he do?"

"He sent me to you, madame."

"To me?"

"Yes, saying this letter contained matters too important to be translated by a stranger and that it would be best for you to do it, who are the most beautiful of learned women, and the most learned of beautiful women."

"I will listen to you, Monsieur Chicot, since such are the king's orders;" said Marguerite.

"Thanks, madame; where does it please your majesty that I should speak?"

"Here! no, no; better in the château. Come to my cabinet, I beg you."

Marguerite looked earnestly at Chicot, who, out of pity for her, had allowed her beforehand to lift up a corner of the veil.

The poor woman felt the need of a support, of a last return to love, perhaps, before submitting to the trial which awaited her.

"Vicomte," she said to M. de Turenne, "your arm to the château. Precede us, Monsieur Chicot, I entreat you!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

MARGUERITE'S CABINET.

WE would not be accused of describing nothing but festoons and flowers, and scarcely allowing the reader to escape though the garden, but, like master, like home; and if it was not useless to describe the alley of three thousand paces, and Henry's cabinet, it may also be somewhat interesting to sketch Marguerite's cabinet.

Parallel with that of Henry and provided with back doors opening into chambers and passages, windows, complaisant and silent, like the doors, hidden by iron blinds,

with locks, the keys of which turned noiselessly ; such was the exterior of the queen's cabinet.

In the interior, modern furniture, carpets of the reigning fashion, paintings, enamels, china, valuable arms, books and manuscripts in Greek, Latin, and French covered the tables ; birds in their cages, dogs on the carpets, a whole world, in fact, vegetable and animal, living a life in common with Marguerite.

Individuals of superior minds, or an over-abundance of energy, cannot go through life alone ; they accompany each of their senses, each of their fancies, with everything in harmony with it, and which their attractive force draws into the vortex, so that, instead of having lived and felt as ordinary people, they have multiplied their sensations, and doubled their existence.

Certainly, Epicurus is a hero for humanity ; the pagans themselves did not understand him ; he was a severe philosopher, but one who, determined that nothing should be lost in the amount of our knowledge and resources, procured by his inflexible economy, pleasures to many, who, acting altogether with the spirit or with matter, would find nothing but privations or vexations.

But we have spoken a great deal against Epicurus, without knowing him ; and we have also highly praised, without knowing them, those pious anchorites of the desert, who annihilated the best of human nature by neutralizing the worst. In killing a man we destroy his passions with him ; but we kill him, a thing forbidden by God, with all his might and in all his laws.

The queen was a woman to understand Epicurus, in Greek, at first sight, which was the least of her merits ; she occupied her life so well that from a thousand griefs she drew forth a pleasure, which, in her quality of a Christian, gave her the right more than any other to bless God, whether called God or Theos, Jehovah or Magog.

This digression clearly proves the necessity we were under of describing Marguerite's apartments.

Chicot was invited to seat himself in a handsome and comfortable arm-chair of tapestry representing Love scattering a cloud of flowers; a page, who was not D'Aubiac, but who was handsomer and more richly dressed, offered more refreshments to the messenger.

Chicot did not accept, but as soon as the Vicomte de Turenne had left the room he began to recite, with the most unfailing memory, the letter of the King of France and Poland by the grace of God.

We know this letter, which we read at the same time as Chicot; we therefore consider it perfectly useless to give the Latin translation.

Chicot spoke this translation with the worst possible accent, that the queen might be as long as possible in understanding it; but skilful as he was in disguising his own work, Marguerite caught it on the wing, and in no way concealed her fury or her indignation.

In proportion as he advanced in the letter, Chicot sank deeper and deeper in the embarrassment he had created for himself; at certain difficult passages he bent his head like a confessor embarrassed by what he is listening to, and in this play of features he had a great advantage, for he did not see the eyes of the queen sparkle, and her nerves contract, at such positive enunciation of her conjugal misdeeds.

Marguerite was not ignorant of her brother's keen dislike to her, many occasions had proved it; she also knew, for she was not a woman to dissemble anything to herself,—she knew how to behave respecting the grounds she had furnished, and those she might yet furnish, so that, as Chicot read, the balance between legitimate anger and reasonable fear was established in her mind.

To be properly indignant, to be mistrustful at the right moment, to avoid danger while repulsing injury, to prove injustice while profiting by advice, this was the grand work going on in Marguerite's mind while Chicot continued his epistolary narration.

We must not suppose that Chicot remained with his head eternally bent down; Chicot lifted now one eye, then the other, and at length became easy, on seeing that, under her half-frowning eyebrows, the queen very gently decided upon her part.

He finished then, with much tranquillity, the salutations of the royal letter.

"By the holy communion!" said the queen, when Chicot had concluded, "my brother writes handsomely in Latin; what vehemence! what style! I should never have supposed him capable of it."

Chicot made a movement with his eyes, and opened his hands like a man who appears to approve from politeness, but does not understand.

"You do not comprehend?" said the queen, to whom all languages were familiar, even that of signs. "I thought you were a good Latin scholar."

"Madame, I have forgotten it; all that I know at present, all that remains to me of my old knowledge, is that the Latin has no article, that it has a vocative, and that 'head' is of the neuter gender."

"Ah! really!" exclaimed some one entering gaily and noisily; Chicot and the queen turned round at the same time.

It was the King of Navarre.

"What!" said Henry, approaching, "'head' in Latin is of the neuter gender, Monsieur Chicot! and why is it not masculine!"

"Ah, sire," said Chicot, "I cannot say, it astonishes me as much as it does your majesty."

"And," said Marguerite, dreamily, "it astonishes me also."

"It must be," said the king, "because it is sometimes the man, and sometimes the woman who rules, and this according to the temperament of the man or the woman."

Chicot bowed.

"This is certainly," he said, "the best reason I know, sire."

"So much the better; I am delighted to be a more profound philosopher than I thought; now let us return to the letter, madame; I burn to hear good news from the French court, and that is just what this M. Chicot brings to me in an unknown tongue, otherwise——"

"Otherwise?" repeated Marguerite.

"Otherwise, I should have been delighted; *ventre Saint Gris!* you know how I like news, and especially scandalous news, such as my brother Henry of Valois knows so well how to relate."

And Henry of Navarre seated himself, rubbing his hands.

"Come, Monsieur Chicot," continued the king, with the air of a man preparing to enjoy himself; "you have recited this famous letter to my wife, have you not?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well! my dear, tell me a little of what this celebrated letter contains."

"Do you not fear, sire," said Chicot, put at ease by this freedom, of which the two crowned heads set him the example, "that the Latin in which the missive is written is an evil prognostic?"

"Why so?" said the king.

Then turning towards his wife:

"Well! madame?" he said.

Marguerite hesitated for a moment as if recalling, one by one, all the phrases that had fallen from Chicot's lips.

"Our messenger is right, sire," she said, when her examination was concluded, and her course decided upon, "the Latin is a bad prognostic."

"Eh, what!" said Henry, "does this dear letter contain ugly news? Beware, my dear, the king, your brother, is a writer of the first order, and extreme politeness."

"Even when he had me insulted in my litter, as it happened near Sens, when I left Paris to rejoin you, sire."

"When one has a brother, whose own conduct is irreproachable," said Henry, in that indefinite tone which

held a middle line between jest and earnest, "a brother a king, a brother punctilious——"

"Who ought to be so for the true honor of his sister and of his house. I do not suppose, sire, that if Catherine d'Albret, your sister, occasioned some scandal, you would have this scandal published by a captain of the guards."

"Ah! as for me, I am a patriarchal and good-natured bourgeois," said Henry; "I am not a king; or, if I am such, it is in jest, and faith, I jest. But the letter, the letter, since it is addressed to me, I desire to know its contents."

"It is a perfidious letter, sire."

"Bah!"

"Oh, yes! and contains more calumnies than are needed, to embroil not only a husband with his wife, but a friend with all his friends."

"Ah! ah!" said Henry, drawing himself up, and giving his features, naturally so frank and so open, an expression of affected defiance; "embroil a husband and a wife, you and me?"

"You and myself, sire."

"And why so, my love?"

Chicot was on thorns, and would have given anything, hungry as he was, to go to bed without his supper.

"The cloud will burst," he murmured to himself, "the cloud is bursting."

"Sire," said the queen, "I much regret that your majesty has forgotten your Latin, which you must have learnt, however."

"Madame, of all the Latin I ever learnt, I remember but one thing, and it is this sentence: *Deus et virtus æterna*—a singular assemblage of the masculine, feminine, and neuter, that my professor could never explain except by the Greek, which at present I understand less than I do Latin."

"Sire," continued the queen, "if you understood, you would find in the letter many compliments to me."

"Ah, very good!" said the king.

"*Optime*," said Chicot.

"But," said Henry, "how can compliments embroil us, madame? Indeed, as long as my brother Henry compliments you, I shall agree with my brother Henry; if they spoke ill of you in this letter, ah! it would be a different affair, madame, and I should understand my brother's policy."

"Oh! if they spoke ill of me, you would understand Henry's policy?"

"Yes, of Henry de Valois; he has reasons for embroiling us which I know well."

"Well, then, sire, these compliments are but an insinuating prelude to calumnious accusations against your friends and mine."

After boldly uttering these words, Marguerite expected a contradiction.

Chicot lowered his head, Henry shrugged his shoulders.

"Come, my dear," he said, "see if, after all, you have not put too much meaning into the Latin,—if my brother's letter really bears that construction."

Softly and gently though these words were spoken, the Queen of Navarre shot at him a glance full of distrust.

"Understand me to the end, sire," she said.

"I desire nothing better, madame, God is my witness," replied Henry.

"Do you need your followers or not?"

"Do I need them, my dear? what a question! What should I do without them, reduced to my own resources, good heavens!"

"Well! sire! the king wishes to detach from you your best servants."

"I defy him to do so."

"Bravo! sire," murmured Chicot.

"Eh! undoubtedly," said Henry, with that apparent candor so peculiar to him, and with which, to the end of his life, he deceived people; "for my followers are attached

to me through love and not through interest. I have nothing to give them."

"You give them all your heart, all your faith, sire, it is the best return a king can make his friends."

"Yes, my dear, well?"

"Well! sire, have no more faith in them."

"*Ventre Saint Gris!* I shall lose faith in them only if they force me to it; that is, if they cease to deserve it."

"Good! in that case," said Marguerite, "it shall be proved to you that they have deserved to lose it, sire; that's all."

"Ah! ah!" said the king; "but how?"

Chicot again bent down his eyes, as he did in every difficult moment.

"I cannot tell you this, sire," replied Marguerite, "without compromising——" and she looked around her.

Chicot perceived that she was embarrassed, and drew back.

"Dear messenger," said the king to him, "will you have the goodness to wait for me in my cabinet? the queen has something private to say to me, something very serviceable to me, as well as I can anticipate."

Marguerite remained motionless, with the exception of a slight nod, which Chicot fancied he had alone understood.

Seeing, therefore, that by going he pleased both the husband and wife, he rose and left the room, bowing to them both at once.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

COMPOSITION IN VERSE.

To remove this witness, whom Marguerite supposed better read in Latin than he was willing to admit, was already a triumph, or at all events a pledge of security for her; for we have observed, Marguerite did not think Chicot so ignorant as he pretended; whereas, alone with her husband, she could give to each Latin word more extension, or commentary, than all the scholastics in *us* would ever give to Plautus or Persius, those two enigmas in long verse of the Latin world.

Henry and his wife, therefore, had the satisfaction of a *tête-à-tête*.

The king had on his countenance no appearance of uneasiness, nor any symptom of suspicion. Decidedly, the king knew nothing of Latin.

"Monsieur," said Marguerite, "I wait for you to question me."

"This letter troubles you greatly, my love," he said; "do not thus alarm yourself."

"Sire, it is because this letter is or ought to be an event; a king does not thus send a messenger to another king, without reasons of the highest importance."

"Well, then," said Henry, "let us leave the message and the messenger, my dear; have you not something like a ball for this evening?"

"Yes, sire, it is our plan," said Marguerite astonished; "but there is nothing extraordinary in that; you know that we dance nearly every evening."

"And I have a hunt for to-morrow morning; a great hunt."

"Ah!"

"Yes, a battue of wolves."

"We have each our pleasure, sire; you like the chase, I the ball; you hunt, I dance."

"Yes, my love," said Henry, sighing; "and there is no harm in that."

"Certainly, but your majesty says this with a sigh."

"Listen to me, madame."

Marguerite became attentive.

"I am uneasy."

"On what subject, sire?"

"About a current report."

"A report? your majesty is alarmed at a report?"

"What is more simple, my love, when this report might cause you pain?"

"To me?"

"Yes, to you."

"Sire, I do not understand you."

"Have you heard nothing?" said Henry, in the same tone.

Margaret began to tremble, lest this might be a method of attack on the part of her husband.

"I am the least curious woman in the world, sire," she said; "and I hear nothing but what is blown into my ears. Besides I think so lightly of what you call reports that I scarcely understand them when listening to them, the best of reasons for stopping my ears as they pass."

"It is your opinion, madame, that we should despise these rumors?"

"Absolutely, sire, and particularly we kings and queens."

"Why so, madame?"

"Because, being sovereigns, every one talks about us, and we should have too much to do, if we listened to them all."

"Well, I think you are right, my dear, and I will furnish

you with an excellent opportunity for applying your philosophy."

Marguerite supposed that the decisive moment had arrived, and rallied all her courage, saying in a firm tone:

"Be it so, sire, with all my heart."

Henry began in the tone of a penitent, who has some great sin to confess.

"You know the great interest I take in Fosseuse?"

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Marguerite, seeing it had no reference to herself, and assuming an air of triumph.

"Yes, yes, in little Fosseuse, your friend:"

"Yes, madame," replied Henry, still in the same tone, "yes, in little Fosseuse."

"My lady in waiting?"

"Your lady in waiting."

"Your folly, your love?"

"Ah! my love, you are now speaking like one of those reports you were abusing just now."

"It is true, sire," said Margaret, smiling; "and I very humbly ask your pardon."

"My love, you are right, public report often lies; and we kings have often great reason to establish this theorem as an axiom. *Ventre Saint Gris!* madame, I think I am talking Greek."

And Henry burst into a laugh.

Marguerite perceived irony in this boisterous mirth, and especially in the sharp glance that accompanied it.

A little uneasiness again took possession of her.

"About Fosseuse, then?" she said.

"Fosseuse is ill, my love, and the physicians do not understand her malady."

"That is strange, sire, Fosseuse, who, according to your majesty, has always remained chaste; Fosseuse who, according to you, would have resisted a king, if a king had spoken to her of love; Fosseuse, this flower of purity, this limpid crystal, must allow the eye of science to penetrate to the depth of her joys and her griefs."



HENRY OF NAVARRE AND LA FOSSEUSE.

"Alas! it is not so," said Henry, sorrowfully.

"What!" exclaimed the queen, with that impatient malice which the most superior woman never fails to fling like a dart against another woman; "what! Fosseuse is not a flower of purity!"

"I did not say that," replied Henry, dryly; "God forbid that I accuse any one. I say that my child Fosseuse is suffering from a disease which she persists in concealing from the physicians."

"From the physicians, perhaps, but from you, her confidant, her father,—this seems very strange to me."

"I know no more about it, my love," replied Henry, resuming his gracious smile, "or if I do, I think it wise to stop there."

"Then, sire," said Marguerite, who fancied she discovered from the turn of the conversation, that she had the advantage, and that it was she who had to confer, instead of asking a pardon; "then, sire, I do not know what your majesty desires, I await your explanation."

"Well! since you wait, my love, I will tell you the whole thing."

Marguerite made a movement, indicating that she was ready to hear all.

"You must—" continued Henry; "but it is asking a great deal of you, my dear."

"Speak on, sire."

"You must have the kindness to go to my child Fosseuse."

"I go to visit this girl, who, I am told, has the honor of being your mistress, an honor you do not decline?"

"Come, come, gently, my love," said the king, "upon my word, you will make a scandal with your exclamations; and, really, I believe the scandal you will cause would delight the court of France, for in this letter of the king, my brother-in-law, which Chicot recited to me, there is, *quotidie scandalum*; that means, for a humble grammarian like myself, daily scandal."

Marguerite made another movement.

"It is not necessary to know Latin for this," continued Henry, "it is almost French."

"But, sire, to whom would these words be applicable?" said Marguerite.

"Ah! that is what I am unable to understand, but you, who understand Latin, will assist me when we come to that point, my love."

Marguerite blushed to her very ears, while, with his head bent down, his hand raised, Henry appeared to be innocently seeking to discover to which of the persons of his court the *quotidie scandalum* might be applied.

"Very well, sire," said the queen, "you wish, in the name of peace, to drive me to a humiliating step; in the name of peace, I will comply."

"Thanks, my dear, thanks," said Henry.

"But what is the object of this visit, sire?"

"It is quite simple, madame."

"Still I must be told, as I am simple enough not to guess it."

"Well, you will find Fosseuse lying down in the room of the ladies in waiting. Women of that kind, you know, are so curious, and so indiscreet, that one cannot tell to what extremity Fosseuse may be reduced."

"Then she fears something," exclaimed Marguerite, with a burst of anger and hatred; "she wishes to hide herself."

"I do not know," said Henry; "all that I know is, that she wishes to leave the chamber of the ladies in waiting."

"If she wishes to hide herself, let her not count upon me. I may shut my eyes to certain things, but never will I be their accomplice."

Marguerite then awaited the effect of her ultimatum.

But Henry appeared not to have heard. He had allowed his head to drop again, and resumed that thoughtful attitude which had struck Marguerite an instant before.

"*Margota*," he murmured, "*Margota cum Turenio*

These are two names I was seeking, madame; *Margota cum Turennio*."

Marguerite, this time, became crimson.

"Calumnies, sire!" she exclaimed, "are you going to repeat these calumnies to me?"

"What calumnies?" said Henry, in the most natural tone. "Do you find any calumny in it, madame? It is a passage from my brother's letter that comes back to me: *Margota cum Turennio conveniunt in castello nomine Loignac*. Decidedly, I must have this letter translated by some scholar."

"Come, let us cease this play, sire," said Marguerite, tremulously, "and tell me plainly what you expect of me."

"Well! I desire, my love, that you would separate Fosseuse from the other girls, and that, having placed her in a room by herself, you would send her only one physician; a discreet physician,—your own for example."

"Oh! I see how it is," exclaimed the queen; "Fosseuse, who boasted of her virtue, Fosseuse, who displayed a lying chastity, Fosseuse is pregnant, and ready to be confined."

"I do not say so, my love," said Henry; "I do not say that, it is you who affirm it."

"It is so, sire, it is so," exclaimed Marguerite; "your insinuating tone, your false humility, prove it to me. But there are sacrifices that no man, even a king, should ask of his wife. Repair yourself the wrongs of Mademoiselle de Fosseuse, sire; you are her accomplice, it is your affair; and let the punishment fall on the guilty and not on the innocent."

"On the guilty, you are right! There you again recall to me the terms of that horrible letter."

"And how so?"

"Yes, guilty is *nocens*, is it not?"

"Yes, sire, *nocens*."

"Well! there is in the letter: *Margota cum Turennio, ambo nocentes, conveniunt in castello nomine Loignac*.

Mon Dieu! how I regret that my knowledge is not so great as my memory is good."

"*Ambo nocentes*," repeated Marguerite, softly, paler than her white lace collar; "he understands, he understands."

"*Margota cum Turenno, ambo nocentes*. What the devil does my brother mean by *ambo*?" unmercifully continued Henry of Navarre. "*Ventre Saint Gris!* my love, it is very astonishing that, knowing Latin as you do, you have not yet given me the explanation of this sentence, which puzzles me."

"Sire, I have already had the honor of telling you——"

"Eh, *pardieu!*" interrupted the king, "here is precisely *Turennius*, walking under your windows and looking up, as though he expected you, poor fellow. I will call him up here. He is very learned; he will tell me what I wish to know."

"Sire! sire!" exclaimed Marguerite, rising from her chair and clasping her two hands, "sire! be greater than all these meddlers, these calumniators of France."

"Eh, my dear, we are not more indulgent in Navarre than in France; it seems to me, that just now you yourself were very severe about poor Fosseuse."

"I severe!" exclaimed Marguerite.

"Yes! I appeal to your memory. However, we ought to be indulgent, madame; we lead such a happy life—you in the balls you adore, I with my chase."

"Yes, yes, sire," said Marguerite, "let us be indulgent."

"Oh! I was quite sure of your heart, my love."

"Because you know me, sire."

"Yes; then you will go and see Fosseuse, will you not?"

"Yes, sire."

"And separate her from the others?"

"Yes, sire."

"Send her your own physician?"

"Yes, sire."

"And no nurse. Physicians are discreet by profession, nurses are gossips from habit."

"It is true, sire."

"And if, unluckily, what they say should be true, and if, in reality, the poor girl has been weak, and yielded——"

Henry raised his eyes to heaven.

"Which is very possible," he continued, "woman is frail, *res fragilis mulier*, as the Evangelist says."

"Well, sire, I am a woman, and I know the indulgence I ought to have for other women."

"Ah! you know everything, my love; you are really a model of perfection, and——"

"And?"

"And I kiss your hands."

"But believe, sire," said Marguerite, "that it is for love of you alone, that I make this sacrifice."

"Oh! oh!" said Henry; "I know you well, madame, and my brother of France, also, who says so many good things of you in his letter, and who adds: *Fiat sanum exemplum statim, atque res certior eveniet*. This good example, no doubt, is the one you give, my love."

And Henry kissed the cold hand of Marguerite, then, stopping at the doorway:

"Say everything kind from me to Fosseuse, madame," he said; "take charge of her, as you have promised me to do. I am going to the chase; perhaps I may not again see you till my return, perhaps, even never; these wolves are wicked brutes; come, let me embrace you, my dear."

He embraced Marguerite almost affectionately, and went out, leaving her stupefied by all she had just heard.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.

THE king rejoined Chicot in his cabinet.

Chicot was still agitated with fears as to the explanation.

"Well! Chicot," said Henry.

"Well! sire," replied Chicot.

"You do not know what the queen pretends?"

"No."

"She pretends that your cursed Latin will disturb her whole household."

"Eh! sire," exclaimed Chicot, "for heaven's sake let us forget the Latin, and there will be an end to it. It is not the same with a piece of spoken Latin as with a written piece. The wind carries away the one, fire cannot sometimes succeed in consuming the other."

"For my part, I think no more about it, or the devil fetch me!" said Henry.

"So much the better."

"I have really something else to do, my faith, than think of this."

"Your majesty prefers amusing himself, eh?"

"Yes, my son," said Henry, very much annoyed by the tone in which Chicot had pronounced these few words; "yes, my majesty prefers to amuse himself."

"Pardon, but perhaps I am in your majesty's way."

"Eh! my son," said Henry, shrugging his shoulders, "I have already told you that it is not here as at the Louvre. Here we make love, war, and politics openly."

The king's glance was so gentle, his smile so winning, that Chicot found himself emboldened.

"War and politics, less than love, eh, sire?" he said.

"My faith, yes, my dear friend, I admit it; this country is so delightful, these wines of Languedoc so savory, these women of Navarre so beautiful."

"Eh, sire," continued Chicot, "you forget the queen, it appears to me; are the women of Navarre prettier and more pleasing than she? if so, I compliment the Navarrese."

"*Ventre Saint Gris!* you are right, Chicot; and that I should forget that you are an ambassador, that you represent King Henry the Third, that King Henry the Third is Madame Marguerite's brother, and that, consequently, before you, for propriety's sake, I ought to place Madame Marguerite above all women! But you must excuse my imprudence, Chicot; I am not accustomed to ambassadors, my son."

At this moment the door of the cabinet opened, and D'Aubiac announced in a loud voice:

"The Spanish ambassador."

Chicot gave a start from his chair which made the king smile.

"Upon my word," said Henry, "this is a contradiction I did not expect. The Spanish ambassador. And what the devil can he want here?"

"Yes," repeated Chicot, "what the devil can he want here?"

"We shall know," said Henry; "perhaps our neighbor, the Spaniard, has some dispute to settle with me."

"I will retire," said Chicot, humbly. "He is probably a real ambassador, whom his majesty Philip the Second sends you, while I——"

"The French ambassador give place to the Spanish ambassador, and that in Navarre! *ventre Saint Gris!* it shall not be so; open that library door, and settle yourself in there, Chicot."

"But there I shall hear everything in spite of myself, sire."

"Eh! you will hear, *morbleu!* what does it matter? I have nothing to conceal. By the way, you have nothing more to say to me from the king your master, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur?"

"No, sire, absolutely nothing."

"Very well; you have nothing but to see and hear, like all the ambassadors of the earth; you will be well placed, therefore, in the study, to fulfil your charge. Look with all your eyes, and listen with all your ears, my dear Chicot." He then added:

"D'Aubiac, tell my captain of the guards to introduce the Spanish ambassador."

Chicot, on hearing this order, hastened to enter the study, and carefully drew the tapestry close.

A slow and heavy step resounded on the sonorous floor, that of the ambassador of his majesty Philip the Second.

When the preliminaries devoted to the details of etiquette were concluded, Chicot was enabled to convince himself, from his hiding-place, that the Béarnais well understood how to give an audience.

"May I speak freely to your majesty?" demanded the envoy in the Spanish language, which every Gascon or Béarnais understood like that of his own country, from their constant analogy.

"You may speak, monsieur," replied the Béarnais.

Chicot opened two large ears—the interest was great for him.

"Sire," said the ambassador, "I bring the reply of his Catholic majesty."

"Good!" said Chicot, "if he brings the reply, there must have been a demand."

"An answer to what?" inquired Henry.

"An answer to your proposals of last month, sire."

"Faith! I am very forgetful," said Henry; "will you have the kindness to repeat these proposals, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur?"

"Respecting the encroachments of the Lorraine princes into France."

"Yes, and particularly those of my neighbor, De Guise. Very well! I remember now; continue, monsieur, continue."

"Sire," resumed the Spaniard, "the king my master, although solicitous to sign a treaty of alliance with Lorraine, has regarded an alliance with Navarre as more loyal, and, in plain terms, more advantageous."

"Yes, let us speak plainly," said Henry.

"I shall be frank with your majesty, sire, for I know the intentions of the king my master with regard to you."

"And may I know them?"

"Sire, the king my master will refuse nothing to Navarre."

Chicot glued his ear to the tapestry, biting the end of his finger to convince himself that he was not asleep.

"If he will refuse me nothing," said Henry, "let us see what I may demand."

"Whatever your majesty may please, sire."

"The devil!"

"Will your majesty, therefore, speak openly and candidly?"

"*Ventre Saint Gris!* everything, that is embarrassing."

"His majesty the King of Spain would place his new ally at ease; the proposition I shall make to your majesty will be a proof of it."

"I am all attention," said Henry.

"The King of France treats the Queen of Navarre as a sworn enemy; he repudiates her as a sister and he covers her with opprobrium: this is patent. The misdeeds of the King of France are, and I ask your majesty's pardon for broaching so delicate a subject——"

"Speak, speak!"

"The misdeeds of the King of France are public, notoriety has consecrated them."

Henry made a movement of contradiction.

"There is a notoriety," continued the Spaniard, "as we are instructed; I repeat, therefore, sire, the King of France repudiates Madame Marguerite for his sister, since he endeavors to dishonor her, by having her litter stopped in public, by having her searched by a captain of his guards."

"Well! Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, to what are you coming?"

"Nothing is easier, in consequence, than for your majesty to repudiate as a wife her whom her brother repudiates as a sister."

Henry looked towards the tapestry, behind which Chicot, with staring eyes, awaited in a palpitation the result of so pompous a beginning.

"The queen repudiated," continued the ambassador, "the alliance between the King of Navarre and the King of Spain——"

Henry bowed.

"This alliance," continued the ambassador, "is fully concluded, in this way. The King of Spain gives the Infanta, his daughter, to the King of Navarre, and his majesty himself weds Madame Catharine of Navarre, your majesty's sister."

A thrill of pride ran through the body of the Béarnais—a shudder of alarm through the body of Chicot. The one saw his fortune rising above the horizon radiant as the rising sun—the other saw descending and dying the sceptre and fortune of the Valois.

The Spaniard, impassible and frozen, saw nothing beyond the instructions of his master.

For a moment there was a profound silence; and after this the King of Navarre replied:

"The proposition, monsieur, is magnificent, and overwhelms me with honor."

"His majesty," hastened to say the proud negotiator, who counted on an enthusiastic acceptance, "his majesty the King of Spain proposes to your majesty but one condition."

"Ah! one condition," said Henry; "that is but just; let us hear the condition."

"In assisting your majesty against the princes of Lorraine—that is, in opening to your majesty a way to the throne—my master wishes to facilitate, by your alliance, a means of keeping Flanders, at which Monseigneur the Duke of Anjou is now nibbling with all his teeth. Your majesty will understand that it is quite a preference shown by my master for you over the princes of Lorraine, since MM. de Guise, his natural allies as Catholic princes, form of themselves a party against M. the Duke of Anjou, in Flanders. Now here is the condition, the only one; it is reasonable and mild. His majesty the King of Spain will ally himself with you by a double marriage, he will help you to"—the ambassador hesitated a moment in finding the proper word—"to succeed to the King of France, and you will guarantee Flanders to him. I can, therefore, knowing your majesty's wisdom, regard my negotiation as happily accomplished."

A silence more profound than the former succeeded these words, in order, no doubt, that the answer, with which the exterminating angel expected to strike either France or Spain, might arrive with all its force.

Henry of Navarre took two or three steps in his cabinet.

"Then, monsieur," he said at length, "this is the answer you are charged to bring me?"

"Yes, sire."

"And nothing with it?"

"Nothing else."

"Well!" said Henry, "I refuse the offer of his majesty the King of Spain!"

"You refuse the hand of the Infanta!" exclaimed the Spaniard, with a start like that caused by the pain of an unexpected sword-thrust.

"A very great honor, monsieur," replied Henry, raising his head, "but which I cannot believe greater than the honor of having married a daughter of France."

"Yes, but this first alliance brought you nearly to the tomb, sire! the second one will bring you to the throne!"

"A precious, incomparable good fortune, monsieur, I know it, but one that I will never purchase with the blood and honor of my subjects. What! monsieur, shall I draw my sword against the King of France, my brother-in-law, for the Spaniard, a stranger? shall I arrest the standard of France in its path of glory, to suffer the towers of Castile, and the lions of Leon, to finish the work it has begun? shall I have brothers slain by brothers! shall I bring the stranger into my country? Monsieur, listen well to this: I asked my neighbor, the King of Spain, for aid against the MM. de Guise, who are jealous and greedy for my heritage, but not against the Duke of Anjou, my brother-in-law; not against the king, Henry the Third, my friend; not against my wife, sister of my king. You will assist the Guises, you say; you will lend them your support? Do so; I will let loose against them and against you every Protestant of Germany and of France. The King of Spain would reconquer Flanders, which is slipping from him; let him do as his father Charles did; let him ask of the King of France a free passage to go and claim his title as first burgher of Ghent, and King Henry the Third, I will be his guarantee, will grant him as loyal a passage as did King Francis the First. I desire the throne of France, says his Catholic majesty; it's possible, but I do not want him to aid me in conquering it; I shall easily take it alone once it is vacant, and this in spite of all the kings in the world. Adieu, then, monsieur. Say to my brother Philip that I am very grateful for his offers; but I should be mortally offended if, when he made them, he had, for a single moment, believed me capable of accepting them. Adieu, monsieur."

The ambassador remained stupefied; he stammered out:

"Beware, sire, the good intelligence between two neighbors may be destroyed by a hasty word."


“Monsieur,” said Henry, “know this, King of Navarre, or king of nothing, is all one to me. My crown is so light that I should not feel it drop, should it slide from my brow ; besides, I am inclined to keep it, be assured.

“Adieu, once more, monsieur, say to the king your master, that I have higher ambitions than those he has offered me. Adieu.”

And the Béarnais, again becoming not himself, but what he was generally known to be, after allowing himself to be governed for a moment by the warmth of his heroism—the Béarnais, smiling courteously, conducted the Spanish ambassador to the threshold of his cabinet.

END OF VOL. I.

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Alexandre Dumas (also known as Dumas père) (1802-1870) was one of the most famous French writers of the 19th century. Dumas is best known for historical the novels *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, both written within the space of two years, 1844-45, and which belong to the foundation works of popular culture. He was among the first, along with Honoré de Balzac and Eugène Sue, who fully used the possibilities of roman feuilleton, the serial novel. Dumas is credited with revitalizing the historical novel in France, although his abilities as a writer were under dispute from the beginning. Dumas' works are fast-paced adventure tales that blend history and fiction, but on the other hand, they are entangled, melodramatic, and actually not faithful to the historical facts.

Alexandre Dumas was born in Villes-Cotterêts. His grandfather was a French nobleman, who had settled in Santo Domingo (now part of Haiti); his paternal grandmother, Marie-Cessette, was an Afro-Caribbean, who had been a black slave in the French colony (now part of Haiti). Dumas's father was a general in Napoleon's army, who had fallen out of favor. After his death in 1806 the family lived in poverty. Dumas worked as a notary's clerk and went in 1823 to Paris to find work. Due to his elegant handwriting he secured a position with the Duc d'Orléans - later King Louis Philippe. He also found his place in theater and as a publisher of some popular magazines. An illegitimate son called Alexandre Dumas fils, whose mother, Marie-Catherine Labrousse, was a dressmaker, was born in 1824. Dumas fils gained fame with his novel *The Lady of the Camillas*, in which a fallen girl, the heroine, gives up her lover rather than let him become a social outcast.

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